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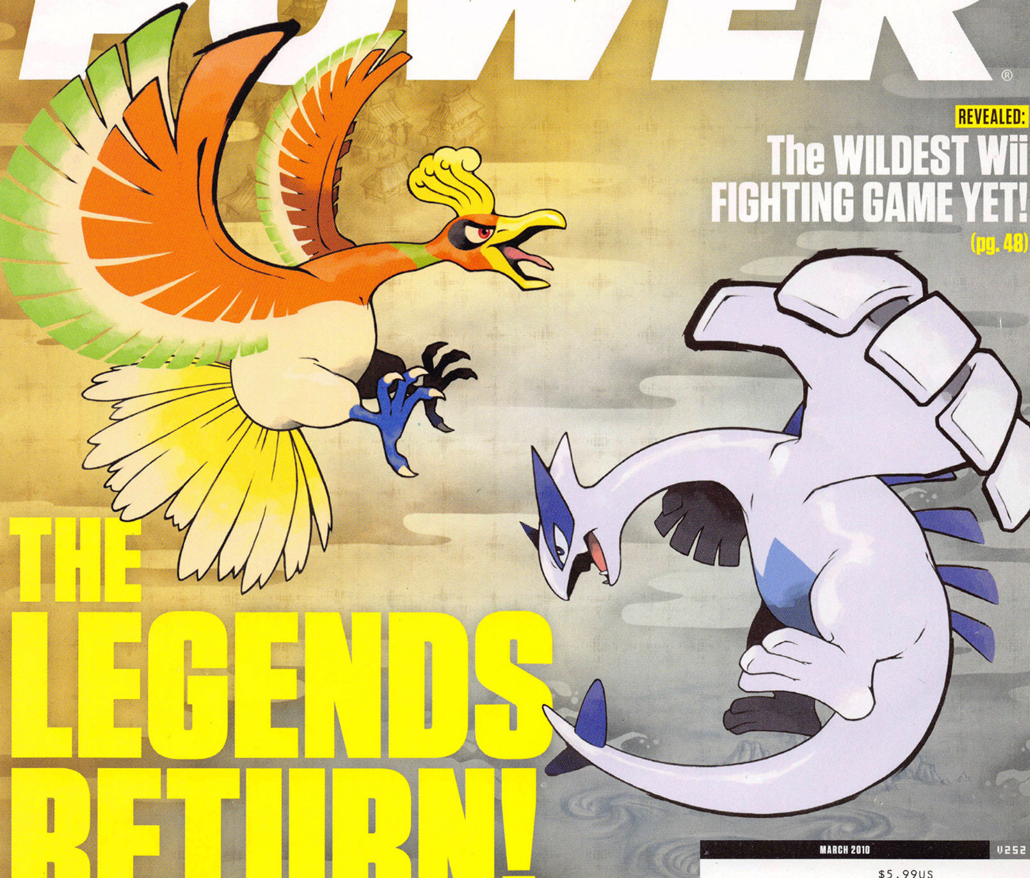
(pg. 48)



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MARCH 2010 V252

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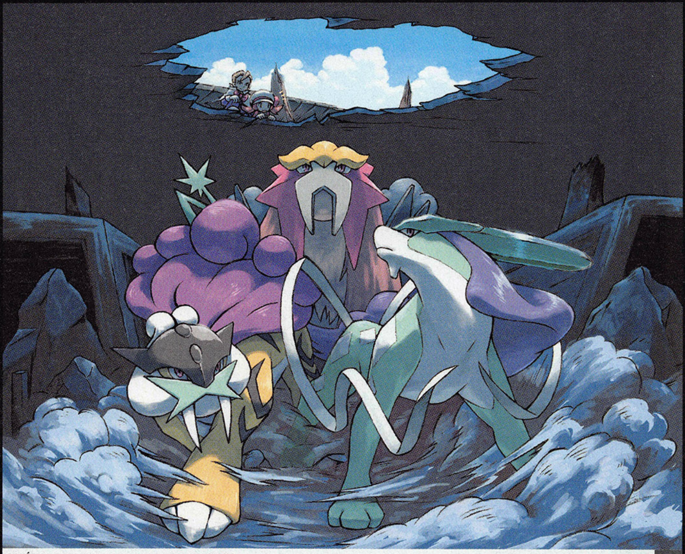
The 2009 Nintendo Power Awards! 56

Will it be Zelda? Mario? Kingdom Hearts? Silent Hill? Find out which games emerged victorious as the greatest of 2009!

The Best of the Decade 68

The NP staff picks the 10 best games of the last 10 years, along with the top character, series, system, and more! Did your favorites make the cut?



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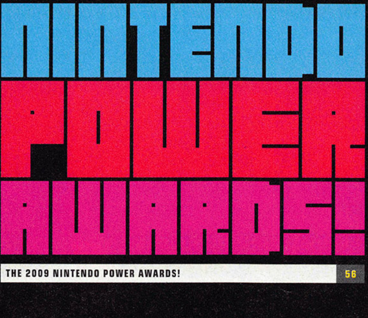

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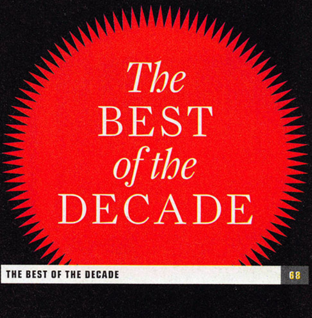
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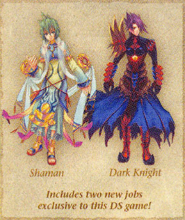
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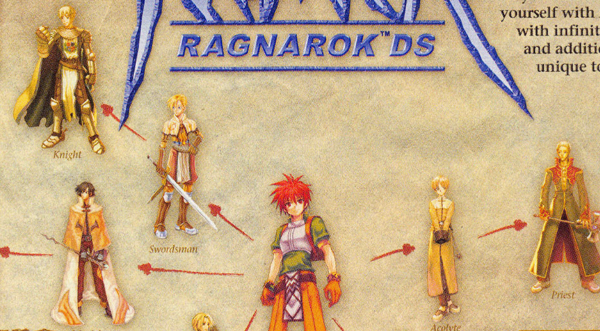
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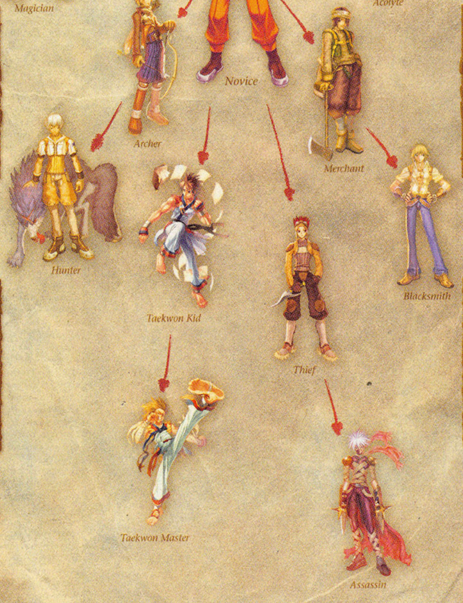
Swordsman
Magician
Acolyte
Priest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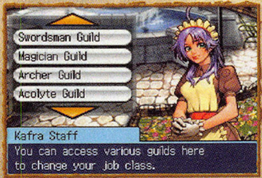
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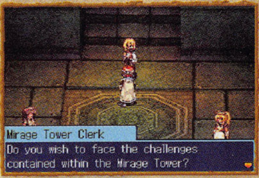

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DW = DSiWARE
GBA = GAME BOY ADVANCE
GCN = NINTENDO GAMECUBE
SNES = SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
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Pulse

The Real Winners

Chris Slate

Nintendo Power has handed out awards for years and years, just like everyone else. But I'd like to talk for just a minute about *why* we give them. Because, although we love to think that our opinions matter, we didn't just slave over a 10-page feature to stroke our own egos. Literally hundreds of games come through our office each year, and while some aren't worth a second look, it never ceases to amaze me how rewarding it is to find that one perfect title—the game that gives a player everything they want, or even what they didn't know they wanted. Plenty of terrific titles go unnoticed, however, and that's where we come in. With the Nintendo Power Awards, we hope to shine a spotlight on the games that deserve, and need, to be played. If we can direct players to great games they'll love, then we've given those titles (and their developers) something in return for countless hours of enjoyment.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

2010 Wii & DS PREVIEW
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NINTENDO POWER
THE YEAR'S 50 BIGGEST GAMES!
SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2
METROID: OTHER M
BOOM SHAKA LAKA!
Wii EXCLUSIVE: NBA JAM RETURNS TO MAKE SPORTS GAMES FUN AGAIN!
Future

V251 **FEBRUARY 2010**

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while handing out awards. But first, this month's special letter request: which game do you feel is the most underrated, and why? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

Inside Job

You know how Princess Peach is constantly kidnapped? I think it's an inside job. Think about it: Toad never manages to stop Bowser from taking Peach—how do we know he even tries? In Super Mario 64 he was the only one not stuck in a painting other than Lakitu, who works for Bowser. This would also explain why Mario kept going to the wrong castles in the original Mario games; Toad was feeding him wrong information.

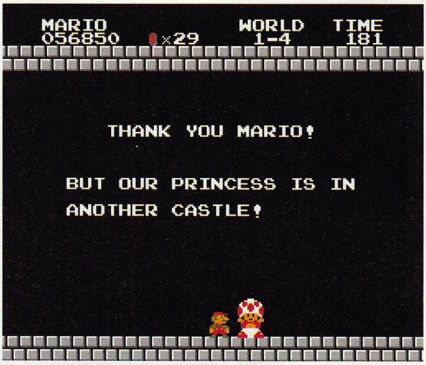
—KRAZIE HAND

You may be onto something, but I stand by my theory that Peach and Bowser are secretly dating and just really like to mess around with Mario.

Better Late than Never

I didn't used to like Mario much at all (I'm serious!), but then I noticed that Mario was listed as the number-one hero in your 250 Reasons to Love Nintendo feature, and I said to myself, "Why in the world did they choose this guy?" So, I started playing games like Super Mario Sunshine, Super Mario 64, Mario Kart, and Mario & Luigi Superstar Saga, and I realized that Mario games are actually more interesting than a lot of Sonic games! No joke! Thanks for making me realize that Mario is actually a very interesting guy! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

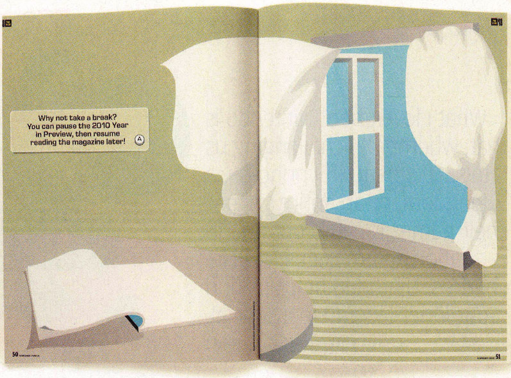
Toad: clueless or conspirator?



THANK YOU MARIO!

BUT OUR PRINCESS IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE!

As I was reading through the 2010 Year in Preview and came to pages 50 and 51, I almost laughed out loud. I play games all the time, and when that "Why not take a break?" message pops up I hit the A Button as fast as possible to skip it and keep playing. In this case, I turned the page and kept reading. Great addition to the magazine, guys! Classic. —**DOMINIC**


Why not take a break?
You can pause the 2010 Year in Preview, then resume reading the magazine later!
A
50
51

Love, Not War

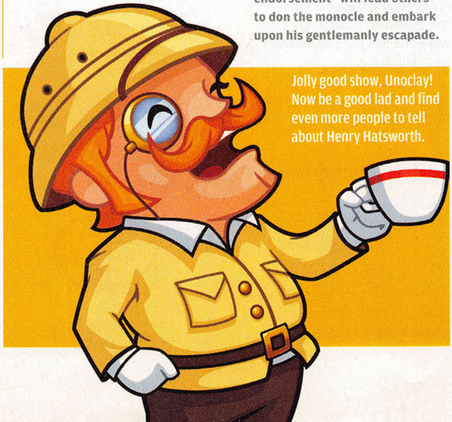
My girlfriend and I love playing games with romance in them. I was playing Princess Debut (great game, by the way), and I thought of something—what if Nintendo made games that didn't just have romantic subplots, but instead focused solely on romance? If the games were presented in an anime style (like Lux-Pain) and had quality voice work, I think they would sell a lot of copies to people like me. Do you know of any romance games for DS or Wii, other than Sakura Wars and Princess Debut? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Have you tried the Harvest Moon games? You attempt to woo the other men or women in town and eventually marry one of them... when you're not engaged in back-breaking farm work, that is.

Hats Off

I recently picked up a copy of Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure for DS. I was happy to see that this phenomenal game got a nod on the ballot for Best New Character of 2009; in all sincerity, this is one of the best games ever released for DS. It's a sincere shame that more gamers haven't experienced this captivating platformer-puzzle hybrid. Perhaps Sir Hatsworth will win enough votes to convince people to support this underrated game. Hatsworth should have been nominated for Best Voice Acting as well—I laugh out loud every time the main character opens his mouth. **—UNOCLAY**

I daresay I agree, old boy! Henry didn't manage to snag any awards, but hopefully his nominations—and your ringing endorsement—will lead others to don the monocle and embark upon his gentlemanly escapade.


Jolly good show, Unoclay! Now be a good lad and find even more people to tell about Henry Hatsworth.

Wa-Hoo!

This is my Klonoa costume. I first discovered the game by reading your magazine, and it was *awesome*! The ending was really sad, but I'm hoping for a sequel. **—EMMI OF PHANTOMILE**

Nice costume! Knowing that we helped sell at least one more copy of that amazing game makes all our hard work worthwhile.

Zelda Minis?

Would you find it interesting to have an episode-based Zelda title similar to the Strong Bad and Tales of Monkey Island series on WiiWare? The idea entered my thoughts because of the seemingly long wait until the next full-fledged Zelda adventure for Wii. **—WILL**

I'll take Zelda however I can get it! This approach could work especially well with an old-school Super NES-type Zelda game.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hoff, I believe there was a mistake in your Spirit Tracks feature. Your "Ride in Style" list of Link's modes of transportation was clearly in reverse order. Give Ricky the kangaroo some credit! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The Hoff says: Look, buddy, being in a kangaroo pouch might sound like it's all glitz and glamour, but obviously you've never spent a prolonged period of time in one. Let me tell you, it isn't pretty. I remember it like it was yesterday—four of us had to take shelter in that sweltering hellhole, but I was the only one to make it back alive and sane. There were joeys everywhere, I tell ya, and fur—lots of fur. Once it gets tangled in your beard you'll never get it out. And then there's the jumping! Oh, the constant jumping. It gives me cold sweats just thinking about it. Of course, it's not half as bad as getting trapped in the den of a ravenous badger when you have lamb chops in your pants, but that's another story.

What I love about Nintendo is that, whether by challenging us to save a beautiful princess, a kingdom, or an entire galaxy, their games tap into our imagination and make us feel like heroes. Nintendo helps us find our inner kid and feel special.
—**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Why do you love Nintendo gaming?

I love Nintendo because I like fantastical, wacky stuff. I mean, where else would you see some strange-looking plumber and his brother jumping on turtles, a kid in an elf costume fighting monsters, or a pink ball with eyes sucking up a gorilla that wears a tie? **—JOAQUIN C.**

How about Nintendo's commitment to the multiplayer experience? And by "multiplayer," I don't mean sitting alone on your couch playing some FPS while smack-talking a 10-year-old from the UK. Nintendo seems to be the only company committed to getting players to play and socialize... in the *same room*! (Gasp!) Playing online with strangers could never compete with the experience of getting together with my friends and sitting around the same television, eating way too much pizza and drinking my weight in pop. **—NEIL**

I have just one major reason for loving Nintendo: the Game Boy! I grew up on the system and have been playing it since I was five years old. I love the Game Boy so much that I collected every version, from the original to the GBA SP, and I also have the first three Nintendo DS handhelds. Thank you, Nintendo, for making game systems that can be easily hidden while you are supposed to be asleep in bed! **—JESSE M.**

I'll have to go with the music of the Super NES. There are just so many amazing soundtracks from that console: EarthBound, Secret of Mana, Chrono Trigger, Final Fantasy (IV and VI), A Link to the Past, ActRaiser, F-Zero, Super Mario RPG, Harvest Moon, Secret of the Stars, The 7th Saga, Breath of Fire, Super Castlevania IV, Donkey Kong Country...I could go on and on. **—UNCLE BRO**

I love Nintendo for everything they've managed to do over the years, from saving the video game industry to revolutionizing consoles to creating some of the best characters, games, and franchises ever. Nintendo shall always be nailed into the minds of gamers everywhere. **—DZ**

I love Nintendo for a zajillion reasons! If I go into further detail, I'd probably fill up your magazine. However, I will tell you my number-one reason is Yoshi. He has always been my favorite video game character. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Nintendo comes out with unique ideas such as the N64 Rumble Pak and Wii Remote, both of which started trends that have become very important to gaming today. But the number-one reason why I love Nintendo is that they make great series and stick with them; Mario and Link haven't died off, and hopefully never will. **—MAX**

I love Nintendo games because they let me take a break from real life for a little while to have fun. **—KELCEE**

Nintendo brings out the best in everyone and doesn't make games for an exclusive audience like some other developers; most titles you can easily pick up and play. In addition, we have the genius Shigeru Miyamoto, possibly the most recognized video game creator ever. His love for adventure has brought about an onslaught of imagination and wonder. Who else could have thought up an ape named Donkey Kong or a plumber who fights Goombas? I love Nintendo because they make the world a more creatively connected place to live. **—DW**

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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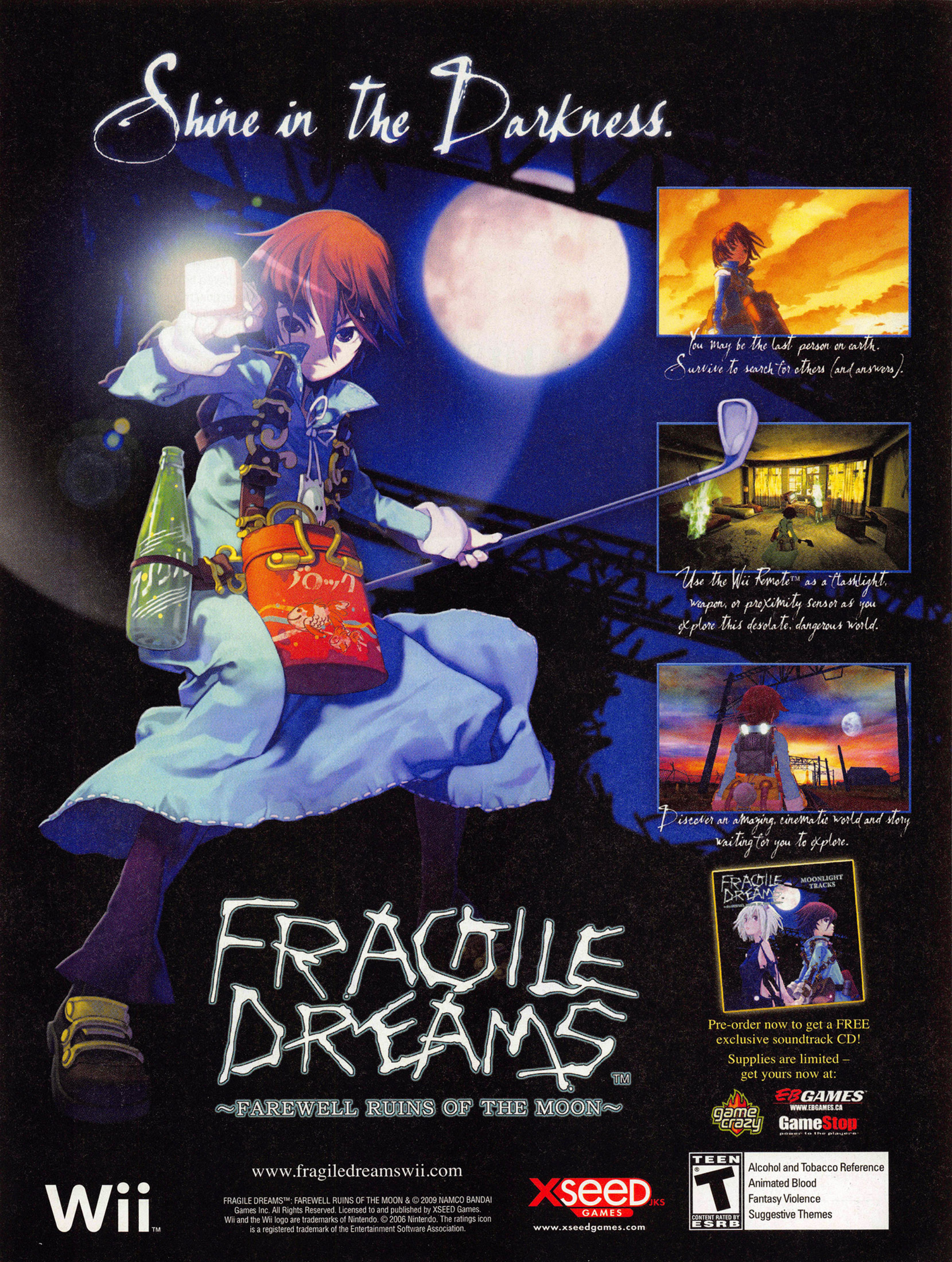

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FRAGILE DREAMS™
~FAREWELL RUINS OF THE MOON~

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TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Alcohol and Tobacco Reference
Animated Blood
Fantasy Violence
Suggestive Themes

ARCADE FIGHT
TATSUNOKO

STICK IT TO THE MAN

MAGIC TOUCH

NETFLIX

It's Showtime!

Netflix and Nintendo join forces to bring streaming movies and television episodes to Wii.

POWER
HOME
1
2
Wii²

Wii OWNERS CAN already check the weather forecast, read the latest news, and browse the Internet on their little white consoles, but starting this spring, they'll also be able to watch more than 17,000 streaming movies and TV episodes (assuming they have a broadband Internet connection) thanks to a new partnership between Nintendo and Netflix. The service will be available at no additional cost to Netflix subscribers who have a plan starting at $8.99 per month. (That membership also entitles you to receive DVDs by mail.)

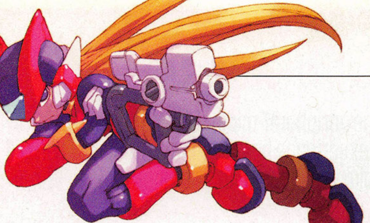
To initiate the feature, Wii owners will need to request an instant-streaming disc from Netflix that loads the necessary application. The disc is free to Netflix subscribers, and can be reserved right now by going to www.netflix.com/Wii. Once the service is up and running, you'll be able to use the Wii Remote controller to browse titles in a variety of categories, such as popular genres or new arrivals. Members will also be able to choose a movie or TV episode to watch directly from their Instant Queue, which they can set up on the Netflix website. No word yet on whether Nintendo is working on a popcorn application next.

—STEVE T.

What to Watch

To help you get your Queue started, here are a few of the titles currently available for instant streaming that we wholeheartedly recommend.

- **30 Rock** (Seasons 1-3)
- **Glory**
- **Lost** (Seasons 1-5)
- **Macross Plus**
- **The Office** (Seasons 1-5)
- **Rocky**
- **Top Gear**
- **Wall-E**

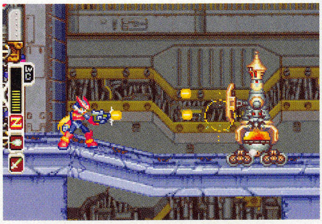


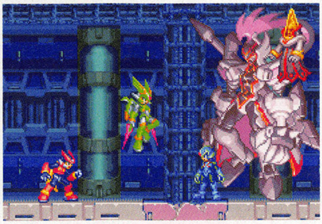
Zero Times Four

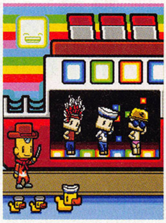
Get four awesome action games in one package with **Mega Man Zero Collection** for DS.

What's better than a gorgeous-looking, kick-butt action game featuring superpowered robots battling for the fate of the world? Try four of them all on one Nintendo DS game card. The Mega Man Zero games were some of the finest action titles to ever hit the Game Boy Advance, and thanks to Mega Man Zero Collection you'll be able to experience their thrills all over again (or for the first time if you missed out on their original releases).

Set more than 100 years after the Mega Man X games, the compilation tells the story of Zero, a noble robotic warrior who once fought alongside Mega Man X. Revived in an era of oppression, Zero joins the resistance movement and finds himself battling the corrupt Neo Arcadian government, waging war against forces from his past, facing off against a power-crazed resistance leader, fighting a diabolical scientist, and more. It won't be easy—the Zero games are notoriously challenging—but as you proceed through the adventure, you'll gain access to numerous weapons (such as the Z-Saber, Shield Boomerang, and Chain Rod) and get to harness the powers of helpful programs known as Cyber-Elves. Ultimately, however, victory relies on precision and skill—which you'll get to put to the test when Capcom releases the collection in June. —**CHRIS H.**

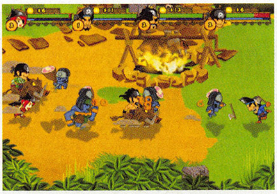






Municipal Melodies

THQ is getting in on the rhythm genre with **Beat City**, due this spring for the Nintendo DS. Players will be tasked with restoring vibrancy to the titular metropolis by completing touch-centric minigames reminiscent of those in Nintendo's Rhythm Heaven. You'll actually be able to see the city transform as you play, and the better you keep the beat, the more the environment comes alive. If only more urban renewal projects could be fueled by funk. —**STEVE T.**



The game's visual style reminds us a little bit of The Behemoth's Alien Hominid.

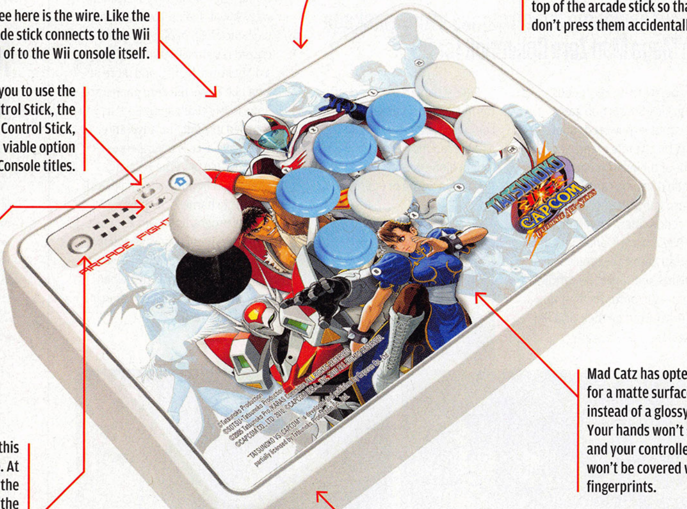
Fresh Pickin's for Picaroons

Say, "Ahoy!" to **Pirates Plund-Arrr**, a multiplayer lootfest on Wii.

You can't drag your peg leg three feet without tripping over a pirate game these days; as a people, we are booty-obsessed. Fortunately, swashbuckling can be a hoot if done right, and Majesco and Boomzap might just have the magic grog here. Pirates Plund-Arrr is a 2-D beat-'em-up of the multiplayer, party-game variety. You and your bilge-rat friends brawl 40-plus enemies as you pillage your way toward Rudebelly, the villainous buccaneer who stole yer Sceptre of Power. (Scupper that!) That's all well and good, but this writer's parrot really starts squawking when it hears tell of "dozens" of weapon variations and an XP system for leveling up your little sons of biscuit-eaters. We'll see if this one shivers any timbers in April. —**PATRICK C.**

Mad about Fighting

Longtime peripheral-maker Mad Catz brings the arcade experience home with the officially licensed Tatsunoko vs. Capcom Arcade FightStick for Wii.



The + and - Buttons—which are Start and Select, respectively, for many games—are located on the top of the arcade stick so that you don't press them accidentally.

One thing you don't see here is the wire. Like the Classic Controller, the arcade stick connects to the Wii Remote controller instead of to the Wii console itself.

This switch allows you to use the joystick as the left Control Stick, the Control Pad, or the right Control Stick, making the FightStick a viable option for Virtual Console titles.

Toggling this switch allows you to lock and unlock the +, -, and Home Buttons. Locking these buttons prevents you from using them, thereby ensuring you don't pause the action accidentally.

Like many arcade sticks, this one has a Turbo feature. At any time, you can assign the Turbo feature to any of the eight face buttons. If the Turbo is going too fast, you can press the button again to slow down the Turbo a bit.

Mad Catz has opted for a matte surface instead of a glossy one. Your hands won't slide, and your controller won't be covered with fingerprints.

Working with Capcom, Mad Catz based this $79.99 Tatsunoko vs. Capcom Arcade FightStick on the Street Fighter IV arcade stick for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. However, the Tatsunoko vs. Capcom controller has all-new components.

Hollywood Havoc

Given Hollywood's current obsession with 3-D films, it should come as no surprise that video game publishers want to get in on the craze. Enter Majesco's Attack of the Movies 3D, a Wii-exclusive shooter in which up to four players can don 3-D glasses (the four pairs of bicolor glasses are included with the game) and blast their way through six worlds teeming with a bevy of baddies. Each world has a different movie-based theme, so you might dismantle robots in the future or zap aliens in outer space. To keep things interesting, there's a wide array of weaponry available to you, including laser cannons and shotguns. Look for Attack of the Movies 3D on store shelves this spring. —**JUSTIN C.**

When You Wish upon a Pentagram...

What do you get when you put Harry Potter in an anime-style dress? We're set to find out when Natsume brings Majo Ni Naru, released last year in Japan, to the States as Witch's Wish for DS. Players assume the role of Vicky, an aspiring witch, as she develops her powers to defend her town from a "dark force." Gameplay is a blend of RPG and puzzle elements, with players dividing time between interacting with townsfolk, solving puzzles, and dueling foes. —**PATRICK C.**

GAME WATCH *forecast*

Wii

Alice in Wonderland	Disney	3/10
Arc Rise Fantasia	Ignition	SUM 10
Arcade Shooter: Ilvelo	UFO	Q1 10
Attack of the Movies 3D	Majesco	SPR 10
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Friendship Valley	The Game Factory	3/10
Calling	Hudson	SPR 10
Combat Wings: The Great Battles of WWII	City Interactive	4/10
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	SPR 10
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	XSEED	3/10
Grease	505	TBA
Green Day: Rock Band	MTV	TBA
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
GTI Club Supermini Festa!	Konami	SPR 10
How to Train Your Dragon	Activision	3/10
Jaja's Adventure	UFO	Q1 10
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	Warner Bros.	2010
Let's Play Ballerina	Deep Silver	3/10
Let's Play Garden	Deep Silver	3/10
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	SUM 10
Major League Baseball 2K10	2K Sports	3/10
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	2010
Monado: Beginning of the World	Nintendo	TBA
Monster Hunter Tri	Capcom	3/10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
NBA Jam	EA Sports	FALL 10
Pirates Pund-Arrr	Majesco	4/10
Pizza Delivery Boy	Majesco	3/10
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Ubisoft	5/10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Racquet Sports	Ubisoft	3/10
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	3/10
Rock Blast	UFO	Q1 10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	Q1 10
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	TBA
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes	Capcom	2010
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Span Smasher	Nintendo	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	2010
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
Tournament of Legends	Sega	6/10
Transformers: War for Cybertron	Activision	2010
Trauma Team	Atlus	4/10

NINTENDO DS

Again	Tecmo	3/10
Alice in Wonderland	Disney	3/10
America's Test Kitchen: Let's Get Cooking	Nintendo	3/10
Art of Murder	City Interactive	3/10
ATV Quad Kings	Storm City	3/10
ATV Revolution	Majesco	3/10
Beat City	THQ	SPR 10
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Welcome to Hugsville	The Game Factory	3/10
Cheer We Go!	Natsume	3/10
Crime Scene	SouthPeak	3/10
Deca Sports DS	Hudson	SPR 10
Dementium II	SouthPeak	4/10
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Easy Piano	Valcon	2010
Ghost Trick*	Capcom	FALL 10
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	Majesco	2010
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Grease	505	TBA
House M.D.	Legacy	TBA
How to Train Your Dragon	Activision	3/10
Imagine Gymnast	Ubisoft	3/10
Infinite Space	Sega	3/10
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	Warner Bros.	2010
Let's Play Ballerina	Deep Silver	3/10
Let's Play Flight Attendant	Deep Silver	3/10
Let's Play Garden	Deep Silver	3/10
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Major League Baseball 2K10	2K Sports	3/10
Mega Man Zero Collection	Capcom	6/10
Monster Rancher DS	Tecmo	3/10
Montessori Music	SouthPeak	3/10
Picross 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pokémon HeartGold Version	Nintendo	3/10
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	Nintendo	3/10
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Ubisoft	5/10
Project Monster	TBA	FALL 10
Puzzle Overload	Telegames	SPR 10
Puzzle Quest II	D3Publisher	SPR 10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	Atlus	3/10
Solitaire Overload Plus	Telegames	SPR 10
Sonic Classic Collection	Sega	3/10
Sonny with a Chance	Disney	SPR 10
T.A.C. Heroes: The Big Red One	Storm City	3/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
TNA Impact!: Cross the Line	SouthPeak	WIN 10
Transformers: War for Cybertron	Activision	2010
WarioWare D.I.Y.	Nintendo	3/10
Witch's Wish	Natsume	2010
Zhu Zhu Pets	Activision	SPR 10

RED TEXT = **TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH.** ***TENTATIVE TITLE** **NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.**

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IN THIS SECTION

WIIWARE PREVIEW
WarioWare D.I.Y. Showcase

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Mega Man 10 Bosses

WIIWARE NEWS
Sonic the Hedgehog 4

WIIWARE REVIEWS
- CASTLEVANIA: THE ADVENTURE REBIRTH
- CHRONOS TWINS DX
- EAT! FAT! FIGHT!
- ECO SHOOTER: PLANT 530
- FAST DRAW SHOWDOWN
- HERON: STEAM MACHINE
- THE MAGIC OBELISK
- MUSCLE MARCH
- PALLURIKIO
- PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY
- PUB DARTS
- RABBIDS LAB
- RAGE OF THE GLADIATOR
- SHADOWPLAY
- TV SHOW KING 2

VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
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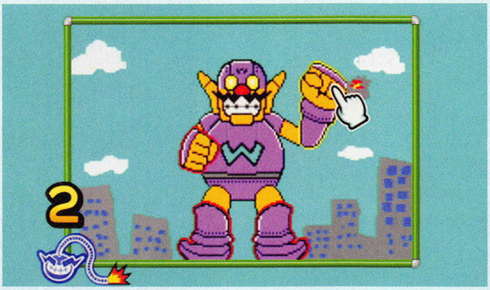
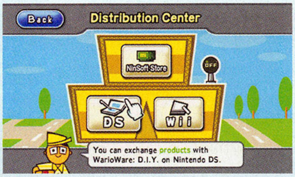
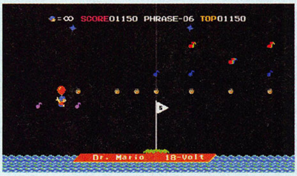
- PILOTWINGS
- SHANGHAI II: THE DRAGON'S EYE
- SUPER SMASH BROS.

DSIWARE REVIEWS
- ANIMAL PUZZLE ADVENTURES
- ARCADE HOOPS BASKETBALL
- DRAGON'S LAIR
- GLOW ARTISAN
- HOT AND COLD: A 3D HIDDEN OBJECT ADVENTURE
- MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: PSYCHIC CAMERA
- THE OREGON TRAIL
- SUDOKU SENSEI
- TOUCH SOLITAIRE
- TRAJECTILE
- UNO
- WORD SEARCHER
- ...and more!





You can exchange products with WarioWare: D.I.Y. on Nintendo DS.



The Wackiest Show on Earth

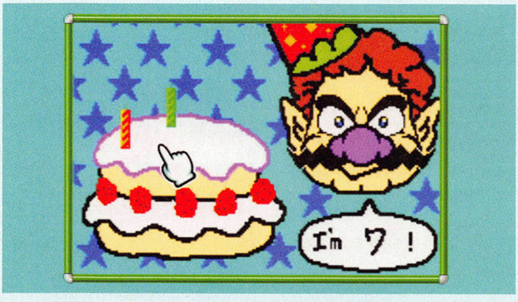
Play it, show it, and share it in WarioWare D.I.Y. Showcase for WiiWare.

DEVELOPED IN CONJUNCTION with WarioWare D.I.Y. for the Nintendo DS handheld (see the preview on page 28), WiiWare title WarioWare D.I.Y. Showcase lets you enjoy Wario's trademark microgame madness from the comfort of your couch. Unlike its DS counterpart, though, Showcase isn't about making microgames; it's about playing them.

At the outset, the title features 72 all-new microgames in four categories, each hosted by returning WarioWare characters. Wario-Man's category features an eclectic mix of games starring Wario; Dribble & Spitz's games focus on sci-fi and action themes; Kat & Ana's titles are all about animals; and 18-Volt's games are inspired by classic Nintendo properties ranging from Duck Hunt to Kid Icarus to Advance Wars. Naturally, there's a lot of variety among the microgames; in Wanna Slice? you need to grab all the pieces of pizza before time runs out, for example, while in Money Hungry you need to dive past ravenous sharks to reach a treasure chest, and in Naval Force you must deflect missiles using Wario's belly. Additionally, Showcase features an interactive music player in which you perform tunes by playing a modified version of NES classic Balloon Fight.

What makes Showcase really stand out, however, is its wireless connectivity with WarioWare D.I.Y. on DS. You can trade microgames back and forth between the two titles, meaning that after you create or modify a microgame on DS, you can transfer it to Showcase and play it on Wii (albeit with motion controls instead of touch-screen controls). Likewise, you can import any of Showcase's premade microgames to D.I.Y. for DS. Even if you don't own the DS version of WarioWare D.I.Y., you can go to Showcase's distribution center and use Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection to access an ever-growing library of microgames made by other users.

Look for WarioWare D.I.Y. Showcase to hit the Wii Shop Channel sometime this spring.
—CHRIS H.



As a bonus, WarioWare D.I.Y. Showcase provides disturbing insight into Wario's childhood.

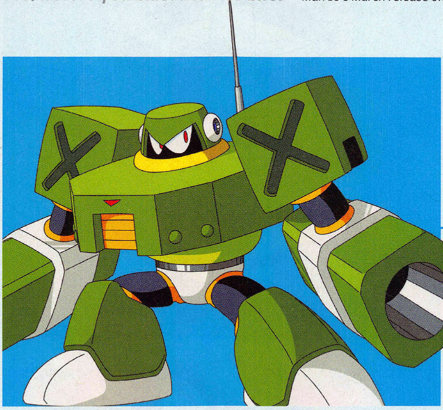
Family Tradition

Say hello to Mega Man 10's Robot Masters (and their numerous relatives) before you blast them to bits.

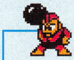
IN MEGA MAN 10, the latest batch of Robot Master bosses isn't officially the creation of mad scientist Dr. Wily. But come on—who else but the demented doctor could come with something as delightfully goofy as Sheep Man? Regardless, eight new renegade robots are stepping up to cause trouble for Mega Man and Proto Man as they search for the cure to the Roboenza virus. Take a closer look at these 'bots gone bad—and examine their roots—in anticipation of Mega Man 10's March release on WiiWare. **—CHRIS H.**

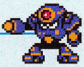
COMMANDO MAN

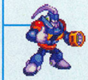
In the past, Dr. Wily tended to focus on single weapons—such as bombs, grenades, or napalm—when designing military-type robots. But Commando Man isn't so specialized; he's pretty much a walking tank with the strength and firepower to annihilate anything in his path. He's gonna use everything at his disposal to blow Mega Man away.

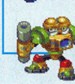


NEAREST RELATIVES:


BOMB MAN (Mega Man 1)

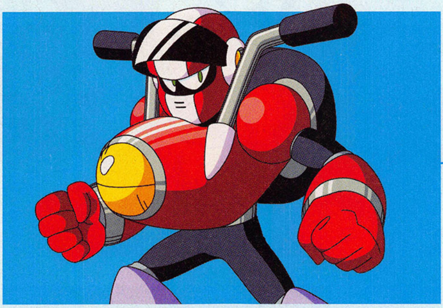

NAPALM MAN (Mega Man 5)


GRENADE MAN (Mega Man 8)


SEARCH MAN (Mega Man 8)

NITRO MAN

A robot who transforms into a motorcycle, Nitro Man bears a bit of a resemblance to Cy-Kill of the GoBots. Maybe Dr. Wily is a closet fan? Of course, Nitro Man isn't the first transforming Robot Master; Turbo Man (from Mega Man 7) could turn into a car. Say, there was a GoBot named Turbo that turned into a car, wasn't there? Suspicious!



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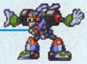
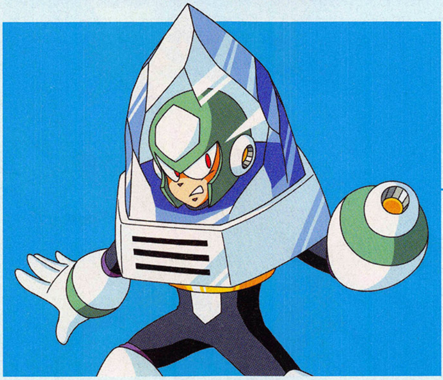
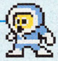

TURBO MAN (Mega Man 7)

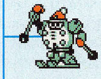
CHILL MAN

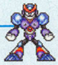
The ice boss is a Wily standby, dating back to his first battle against Mega Man. Chill Man and his frigid comrades would probably be pretty fun to hang out with—getting in snowball fights, going skiing, instantly making ice cubes for drinks, etc.—if they weren't built by a crazed scientist bent on world domination.

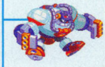


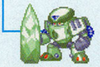
NEAREST RELATIVES:


ICE MAN (Mega Man 1)


BLIZZARD MAN (Mega Man 6)

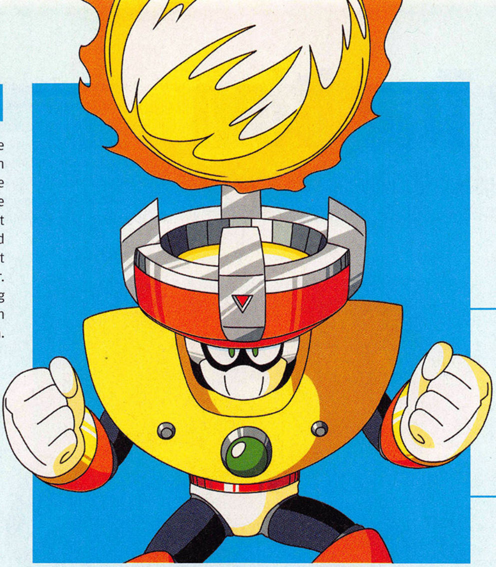

FREEZE MAN (Mega Man 7)


FROST MAN (Mega Man 8)


COLD MAN (Mega Man & Bass)

SOLAR MAN

Heat- and fire-based bosses have long been a tradition in Mega Man games. Solar Man isn't quite like his predecessors, though; one aspect that sets him apart is that the glowing sun above his head actually gets stronger if you shoot it instead of Solar Man proper. The whole energy-orb-throwing thing is reminiscent of Mega Man 4's Pharaoh Man.



NEAREST RELATIVES:

FIRE MAN (Mega Man 1)

HEAT MAN (Mega Man 2)

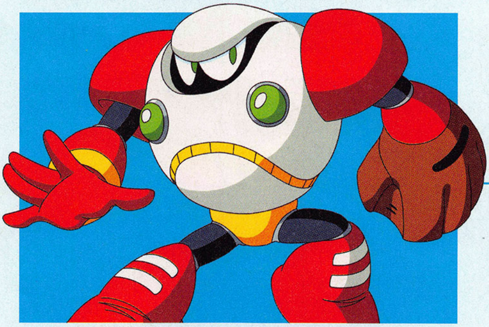
FLAME MAN (Mega Man 6)

MAGMA MAN (Mega Man 9)

PHARAOH MAN (Mega Man 4)

STRIKE MAN

Although there have been numerous other sports references in the Mega Man series (heck, there was an entire game called Mega Man's Soccer), this is the first Robot Master we can think of that's dedicated solely to sports. Other bosses have had mighty throwing abilities, though. We wonder how far Guts Man could hurl the ball-shaped Strike Man.

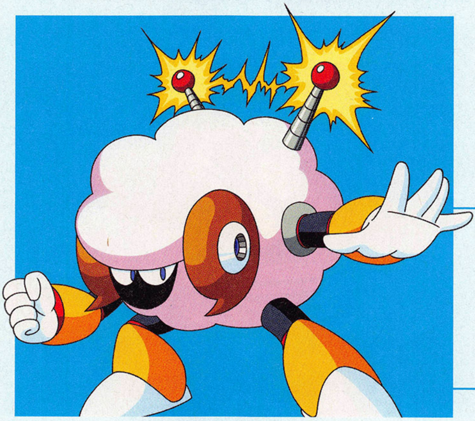


NEAREST RELATIVE:

GUTS MAN (Mega Man 1)

SHEEP MAN

Animal-themed Robot Masters tend to be based on something dangerous or at least creepy. But not Sheep Man—he's the first robotic barnyard animal to earn boss status (and probably the softest Robot Master ever created). His ability to turn into floating fluffballs and unleash electrical blasts is similar to the power of Cloud Man.



NEAREST RELATIVES:

SNAKE MAN (Mega Man 3)

TOAD MAN (Mega Man 4)

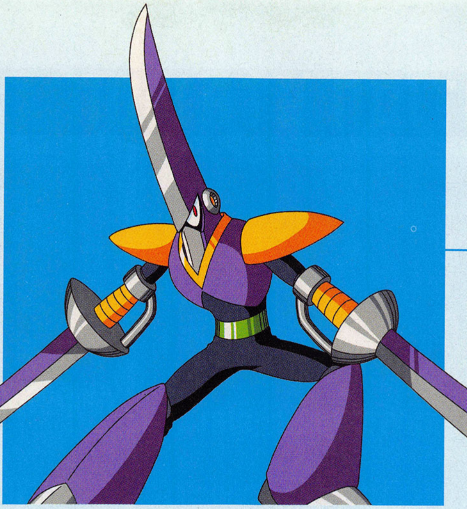
CENTAUR MAN (Mega Man 6)

HORNET MAN (Mega Man 9)

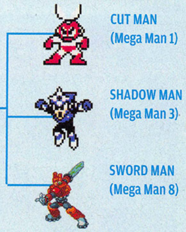
CLOUD MAN (Mega Man 7)

BLADE MAN

Sharp, pointy things are quite dangerous, even for robots like Mega Man, so it's no surprise that several bosses have been equipped with such implements. But Blade Man doesn't just hold blades or throw blades—the guy's essentially a walking cutlery shop. Also, he's very handy to have around during steak dinners.

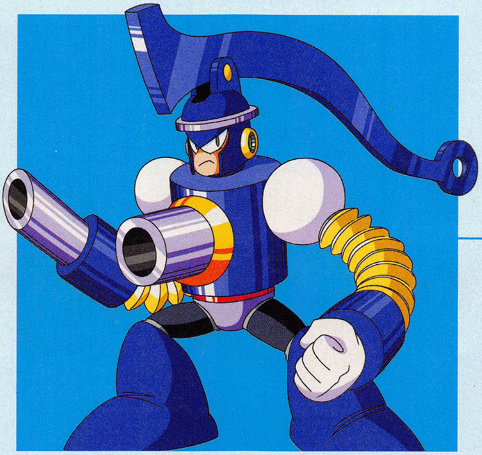


NEAREST RELATIVES:

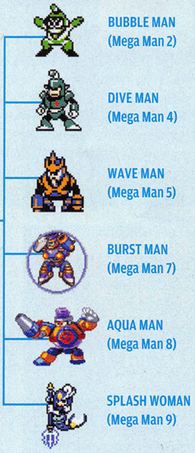

CUT MAN
(Mega Man 1)
SHADOW MAN
(Mega Man 3)
SWORD MAN
(Mega Man 8)

PUMP MAN

Pump Man can't be very happy. After all, while other Robot Masters get equipped with something cool, like a cannon or a sword, he winds up with a water pump for a head. Nonetheless, he's not the first Mega Man boss to use the power of water as an offensive weapon, as enemies like Wave Man and Aqua Man can attest.

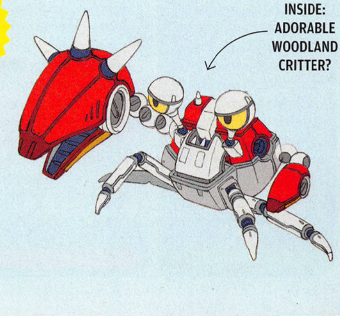


NEAREST RELATIVES:


BUBBLE MAN
(Mega Man 2)
DIVE MAN
(Mega Man 4)
WAVE MAN
(Mega Man 5)
BURST MAN
(Mega Man 7)
AQUA MAN
(Mega Man 8)
SPLASH WOMAN
(Mega Man 9)

Sonic the Hedgehog 4!

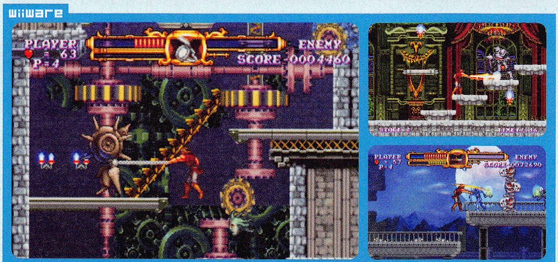
Old-school Sonic fans, our dream has finally come true. After more than 15 years, the blue blur will return to his roots with Sonic the Hedgehog 4, a classic-style, side-scrolling platformer coming to WiiWare later this year. At the time of this writing, specifics remain tightly under wraps, but we can tell you that Sonic is the only playable character (suck it, Big!) and that we'll be revealing much more about this hotly anticipated project in the very near future. In the meantime, you'll have to make do with the adjacent concept art, which hints strongly at the game's direction and looks an awfully lot like one of Dr. Robotnik's creations from the Genesis days. Who wants to bet there's a cuddly rabbit or squirrel trapped in there? —STEVE T.



INSIDE: ADORABLE WOODLAND CRITTER?

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare



CASTLEVANIA: THE ADVENTURE REBIRTH

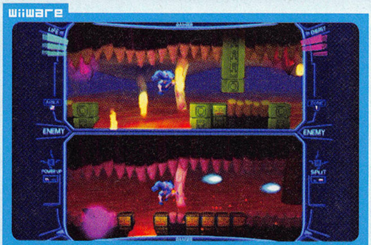
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** GENRE: **ACTION** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Chris Sl's Pick

I prefer the straightforward action of the classic 8- and 16-bit Castlevanias to today's adventure-style "Metroidvania" titles, and Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth is a perfect illustration of why. The game moves forward at a brisk pace with no backtracking, offers a lot of scenic variety, and isn't bogged down with some silly, unnecessary story—you're a Belmont with a whip and you just get on with it. The SNES-tastic graphics are good enough that you won't need to wear retro goggles to enjoy them (likewise for the nicely redone classic tunes), and your control over jumps is much batter than it was in the old days. You can reach and beat Dracula in just a few hours, but that's fine since the price is relatively low and you can replay the game on various difficulty settings. It's annoying, however, that there isn't a save option in case you need to take a break. Still, I highly recommend this to both longtime series supporters and action fans in general.

Recommended

WiiWare



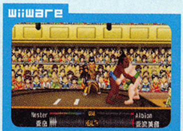
CHRONOS TWINS DX

PUBLISHER: **ENJOYUP** GENRE: **ACTION** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

With a menu system that looks like it should (but doesn't) support the Wii Remote, and an intro filled with broken English, Chronos Twins DX doesn't start on an impressive note. Things look up once the split-screen gameplay begins and you begin to understand the mechanics. As an alien warrior battling foes in both the past and the present, you move on both screens simultaneously. It takes an awful lot of hand-eye coordination to keep track of the enemies and obstacles on both screens, and the game isn't shy about tossing you into dangerous situations right out of the gate. Unfortunately, the sluggish controls tend to get in the way. Strip away the clever temporal gimmick, and you're left with a game that plays like a half-hearted Mega Man clone. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

WiiWare



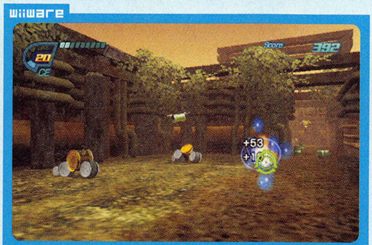
EAT! FAT! FIGHT!

PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Eat! Fat! FIGHT! is essentially a sumo-wrestler tamagotchi; players create a cartoonish pugilist then work toward *yokozuna* status via eating, training, and fighting minigames. A balanced regimen yields girth and increased prowess in the ring. Without question the game trades on cuteness to disguise a lack of depth, but the sight of your Mii head atop an ever-expanding sumo physique will likely coax you into an unexpected compulsion. Must! Get! FATTER! —PATRICK C.

Recommended

WiiWare



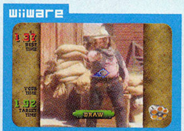
ECO SHOOTER: PLANT 530

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **SHOOTER** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

This is an on-rails shooter that has some good ideas, but ultimately feels half-formed. Developed by Intelligent Systems, the makers of the WarioWare and Fire Emblem series, the game features high production values—as evidenced by its excellent graphics and sound. In a clever twist, the player's health and ammo stem from the same source, so careful shooting is a must. You can also vacuum up energy dropped from defeated foes. The goofy story—involving an alien race that bestows life to Earth's empty cans—results in some fairly dull enemy design, however. With only three stages and an unlockable challenge mode, it's also over too soon. The shooting mechanics are great, but you'll long for more. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

WiiWare



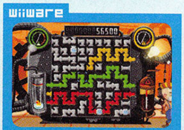
FAST DRAW SHOWDOWN

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Fast Draw Showdown is a port of a 1994 arcade game of the same name, and this Mad Dog McCree-style light-gun shooter definitely shows its age. Admittedly, there is a certain appeal in playing a game that's so ridiculously cheesy, but that interest wanes the longer this repetitive title is played. The game does make good use of the Wii Remote; however, the same could be said of pretty much *any* light-gun shooter on Wii. —JUSTIN C.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



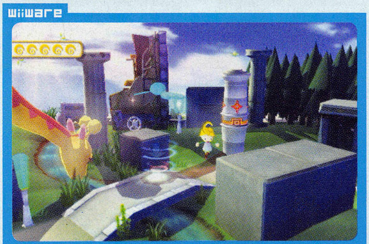
HERON: STEAM MACHINE

PUBLISHER: **TRIANGLE STUDIOS**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

You've undoubtedly played one of those games where you need to connect a bunch of twisting tubes in order to make liquid flow from one side of the screen to the other. In Heron, that familiar concept is mixed with Bejeweled, and the result is a fairly solid puzzler. Since you can only rotate pipe segments and not shift them around, the action often feels limiting. The game's repetitive nature keeps it from being truly memorable. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

wiiware



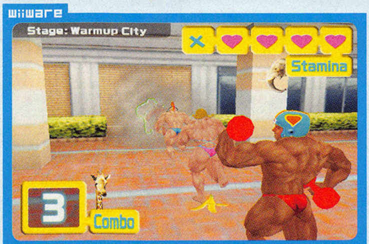
THE MAGIC OBELISK

PUBLISHER: GAME ARTS GENRE: PUZZLE Wii POINTS: 500

Game Arts has long been one of my favorite developers, so it's great to see the makers of Lunar and Grandia dip their toes in the WiiWare waters. The core concept behind The Magic Obelisk—manipulating shadows to lead your sun-averse friend through various locales—makes for a unique, thoughtful, and, at times, challenging puzzler. A simple yet sincere storybook tale carries you through more than 30 levels, and the gentle soundtrack creates a soothing atmosphere. You'll be thankful for that last part, because your charge's automatic movements can lead to some moments of intense frustration. It's not enough to ruin the experience, but if the little punk would just sit still, the game would definitely be better for it. That bewildering design choice aside, this is five bucks well spent. —STEVE T.

Recommended

wiiware



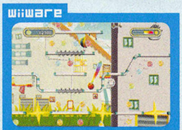
MUSCLE MARCH

PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI GENRE: ALTERNATIVE Wii POINTS: 500

Muscle March is a game that you really want to like based on the premise alone. You control one of several brawny bodybuilders (or a polar bear) as they chase down a series of thieves. As the crooks burst through walls, you must quickly position your Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers so that you fit through the resulting hole. The game is full of bizarre Japanese humor, manic tunes, and disturbing jiggling glutes. It's great to show to your friends to get a few cheap laughs, but all the mantastic imagery can't disguise the overly simple, dull, and repetitive gameplay that grows tiresome within minutes. Factor in the sudden difficulty spike, and the joke gets old even faster. This might have been a decent minigame in a larger release, but on its own, it's a bust. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

wiiware



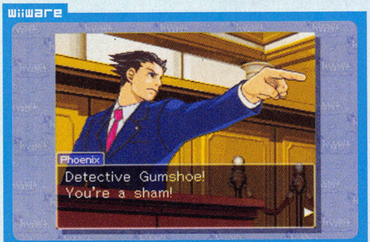
PALLURIKIO

PUBLISHER: PLAYSTOS ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: PLATFORMER
Wii POINTS: 1,000

Like many recent platformers, Pallurikio bets the farm on an inventive gameplay mechanic; players guide a marblelike character (Pallurikio) through levels using only jumps. The Wii Remote controls the power and trajectory of said jumps, while physics does the rest. It's all about inertia, gravity, and timing. Unfortunately, although the control scheme is intriguing, the game relies too heavily on it; the action grows repetitive far quicker than it should. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

wiiware



Phoenix
Detective Gumshoe!
You're a sham!

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM GENRE: ADVENTURE Wii POINTS: 1,000

The original Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney was a pretty brilliant game. The same can be said for this release...since it's virtually identical. Sure, the save system has been improved and there are gesture controls in lieu of voice commands, but contentwise it's almost exactly the same—the graphics haven't even been upgraded for the series's console debut. Nonetheless, this is a top-notch title with great characters, a fantastic story, and innovative gameplay that's unlike anything else out there (except for its sequels, naturally). Though it's hard to justify a repeat purchase for Phoenix Wright vets, this budget-priced version is a great way for newcomers to give the series a shot. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

wiiware

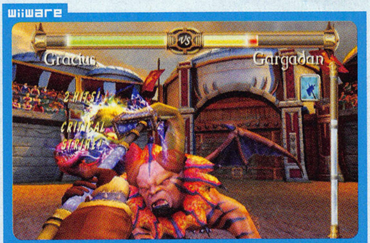
PUB DARTS

PUBLISHER: BIG BLUE BUBBLE
GENRE: SPORTS
Wii POINTS: 500

Darts seems like a sport ripe for Wii translation; it hinges on a basic motion gesture that practically begs for migration to the Wii Remote. But while Pub Darts makes a decent go of it—passable presentation, five classic darts games, and multiplayer—there is undeniably something lost in translation. The dart-throwing gesture can be aped by the Wii Remote, but the controller feels more like a brick than a dart, keeping the game well shy of the bull's-eye. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

wiiware



RAGE OF THE GLADIATOR

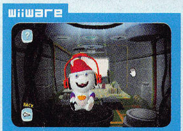
PUBLISHER: GHOSTFIRE GAMES GENRE: FIGHTING Wii POINTS: TBD

Rage of the Gladiator has the spirit of Punch-Out!! if not the charm. With a bizarre cast of opponents, fixed character positions, and pattern-based gameplay that incorporates blocking, dodging, and high and low attacks, the developers have clearly learned from the best. Memorizing an opponent's attacks and figuring out how to counter them is certainly satisfying, and the game looks very good; it's one of the most visually impressive titles on WiiWare. Still, it could have been better with a bit more polish. The first-person view and subsequent lack of an onscreen character causes a slight disconnect in the action and makes some enemy attacks feel cheap, and despite multiple control schemes none of them are ideal. The result is a game that's good but not great. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare



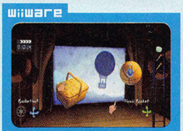
RABBIDS LAB

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Talk about a quick and dirty cash-in. For Rabbids Lab, Ubisoft just lifted the (admittedly creative) customization mode from Rabbids Go Home, dumped it on WiiWare, and slapped a five-dollar price tag on it. To make matters worse, a bunch of options have actually been cut from this version. Shaking the Wii Remote to abuse your Rabbid is amusing for about two minutes, but overall, this is a pretty shameful offering that only tarnishes the brand. –STEVE T.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



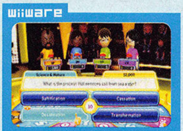
SHADOWPLAY

PUBLISHER: **DEEP FRIED ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **800**

ShadowPlay forces its victims to manipulate objects in front of a screen until they cast a shadow in the required shape. Generally, the experience is not unlike using a rudimentary 3-D-modeling app; players move, rotate, and resize 3-D objects in space. If you're thinking, "Wait a minute; 3-D-modeling is how you *make* games—it isn't a game unto itself!" then you officially have the common-sense insight that escaped the makers of this dud. –PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



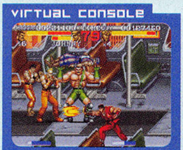
TV SHOW KING 2

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **PARTY GAME**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Working off the same basic formula as 2008's four-player quiz title, Gameloft's follow-up improves on the original with online play, customizable questions, and free downloadable question packs. As before, you can wait to see how other characters answer, but your potential point reward ticks down along with the seconds. Small quibbles: the spinning wheel adds too much of a luck factor and even the Genius-level questions are on the simple side. –GEORGE S.

Recommended

Virtual Console



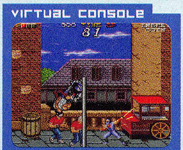
FINAL FIGHT 3

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1995**

Though Final Fight 3 doesn't match the quality of the original Final Fight, it nonetheless provides a fun, impactful, punk-pounding experience. Fighting-game-style special moves and branching paths make this beat-'em-up stand out from similar titles, and it's a blast in two-player co-op mode. The drawbacks are dull music and questionable character designs—what's the deal with Haggar's spandex biking shorts? –CHRIS H.

Recommended

Virtual Console



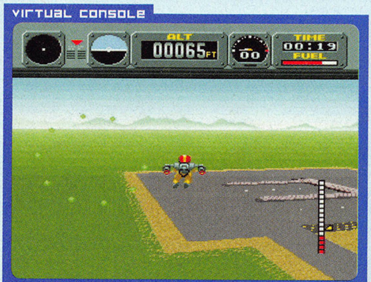
NINJA GAIDEN

PLATFORM: **ARCADE**
PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

NES players rightfully remember Ninja Gaiden as one of the best (and toughest) action games on the system. But this version hails from arcades, and it isn't about learning enemy patterns and mastering cool wall-jumps; it's about utilizing the ancient ninja technique of punching and kicking fools in the face. The result is a fairly awkward beat-'em-up that fails to reach the high standards associated with the Ninja Gaiden name. –CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

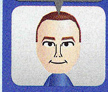
Virtual Console



PILOTWINGS

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **SIMULATION** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1991**

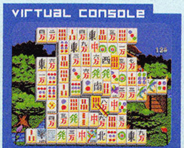
Chris Sl's Pick



The Super NES 3-D graphics aren't flattering and the Control Pad is a little clumsy for this kind of game, but Pilotwings still stands as one of Nintendo's most unique and charming titles. With a wide variety of events—skydiving, rocket-belting, hang-gliding, flying a light plane—and wacky bonus games, Pilotwings packs in plenty of diversity and challenge. It's a perfect lazy-day kind of game, although playing the tougher stages can't really be called relaxing.

Recommended

Virtual Console



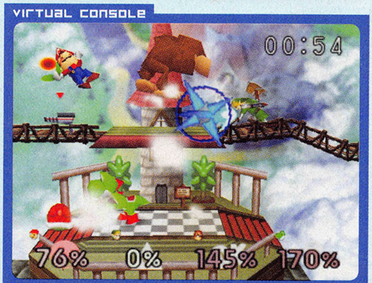
SHANGHAI II: THE DRAGON'S EYE

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA/ACTIVISION**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Solitaire mah-jongg is adapted for two players in Shanghai II by offering timers and alternating play. This faithful, if not attractive, rendition may not turn you into a mah-jongg player, but if you're a fan already, it provides a good alternative when a real board is unavailable. The Dragon's Eye variant is more directly competitive, but luck plays a bigger part than strategy in determining the outcome. –GEORGE S.

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



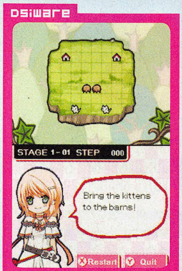
SUPER SMASH BROS.

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 64** PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **FIGHTING** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1999**

I would have made this a staff pick, but its appeal is somewhat diminished by the fact that both Super Smash Bros. sequels are infinitely better—if you've got Melee or Brawl, this version is more of a historical curiosity than anything. That's not to say the game isn't still fun, however, and high-level players may appreciate the subtle differences in the fighting system between this and other games in the series. Serious Smash fans should buy it on principle, and series newcomers will be hard-pressed to find a better four-player value—just don't expect it to eat into your time spent with Brawl. –CHRIS SL.

Recommended

DSiWARE



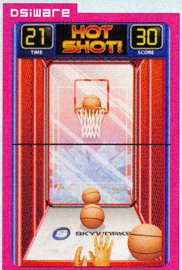
ANIMAL PUZZLE ADVENTURES

PUBLISHER: AKSYS
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

The puzzles here involve moving groups of animals against obstructions so they arrive at their destinations in the necessary formation. Tedium and lackluster rewards will quickly leave players asking themselves, "Where are the adventures?" —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



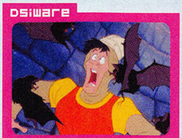
ARCADE HOOPS BASKETBALL

PUBLISHER: SKYWORKS INTERACTIVE
GENRE: SPORTS
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Skyworks faithfully recreates the arcade experience, substituting stylus swipes for wrist flicks. Unfortunately, this inherently repetitive game loses much of its charm when you subtract the real-life basket. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



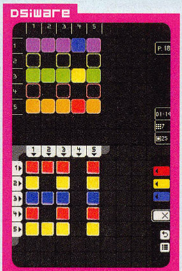
DRAGON'S LAIR

PUBLISHER: DIGITAL LEISURE
GENRE: ACTION
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

The arcade classic Dragon's Lair was more famous for its animated visuals than for its memory-based gameplay, which is actually somewhat dull. Even so, the game is full of retro charm, and this port is surprisingly faithful to the original. Sure, the video is compressed and the sound is a bit tinny, but it's still mighty impressive for a DSiWare title. The only problem is that after the initial wow factor wears off, you have a game that's mostly a novelty. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



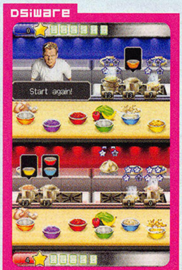
GLOW ARTISAN

PUBLISHER: POWERHEAD GAMES
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Just when I thought all the good puzzle-game ideas had been used up, along comes Glow Artisan, a game about layering colors on top of one another to create various patterns. Like all good puzzlers, it's easy to play but full of complexity. You can even use photos to generate new puzzles. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

DSiWARE



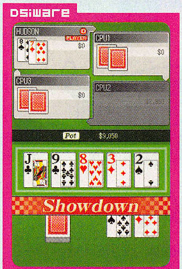
HELL'S KITCHEN VS.

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
GENRE: SIMULATION
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

Hell's Kitchen Vs. is a simplistic, expensive title that's more about time management than anything else. (Cooking Mama this ain't.) As this is based on Gordon Ramsay's *Hell's Kitchen* TV series, you get some sound bites from the celebrity chef, but they're repeated far too often. —JUSTIN C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



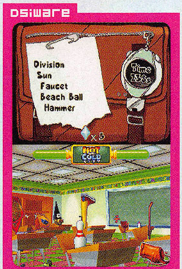
HIGH STAKES: TEXAS HOLD'EM

PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: CARD GAME
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Poker AI is tricky; an omniscient computer screams skullduggery, and bluffing seems largely pointless. These perils are manifest here, which tempers the fun considerably, but multiplayer offers respite from suspect software opponents. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



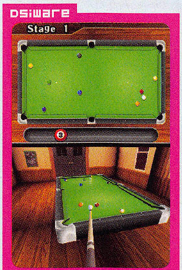
HOT AND COLD: A 3D HIDDEN OBJECT ADVENTURE

PUBLISHER: MAJESCO
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

The premise of Hot and Cold—trying to find objects within a time limit—isn't great, but the real problem is the game's controls. Since you both turn and grab items via the touch screen, you'll often do one when trying to do the other. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



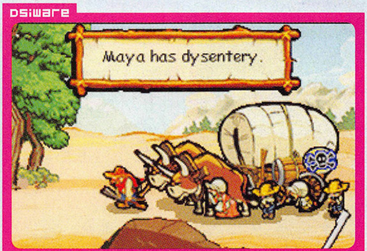
JAZZY BILLIARDS

PUBLISHER: AKSYS GAMES
GENRE: SPORTS
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 200

Pool games are common, so it's hard to like one that's brazenly deficient; here, you get only one game type (nine-ball) and limited shot control (center-ball shots only!). Throw in a poor table view, an inability to save your progress, and bland music, and this one in hardly on cue. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



THE OREGON TRAIL

PUBLISHER: GAMELOFT **GENRE:** SIMULATION **NINTENDO DSi POINTS:** 800

Phil T's Pick

For a title that's considered educational, The Oregon Trail is surprisingly fun. This updated version of the middle-school classic adds several simple yet enjoyable minigames, such as hunting, fishing, and berry-picking, to the core gameplay, which mostly consists of basic resource management and strategic planning. Menial tasks like maintaining a steady food supply, repairing a busted wagon, and continually adjusting your travel speed so that you reach the next town in a timely fashion shouldn't make for a satisfying game, but it works. The tacked-on Nintendo DSi camera support is easily ignored because the game itself is still a blast for players of all ages.

Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare
Virtual Console
DSiWare

DSiWare

MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: PSYCHIC CAMERA

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: ALTERNATIVE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 200

Psychic Camera's primary tricks would seem more psychic if your subjects didn't have to tell or show you what they're thinking of. Since they do, however, the "magic" is fairly transparent, and to make matters worse, the interface isn't quite up to the task. There is a more-complex, less-obvious variation that relies on a deck of cards, but if you can pull that off you hardly need this software. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWare

No.008
Best Time
00:05:00
Time
00:14:06
Erase
Save

SUDOKU SENSEI

PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Sudoku Sensei uses the same top-notch, user-friendly engine as Sudoku Master, but Sensei's 100 puzzles are challenging to the max. Other than annoying limitations on note-taking, this is a solid investment—at least, if you're a hardcore sudoku fan. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWare

Klondike
Easy - Today's Score
Games Won: 1/10 (10.0%)
Easy - Lifetime
Wins: 1
Grand Total - All Levels
Wins: 1
Time played today: 36 min.

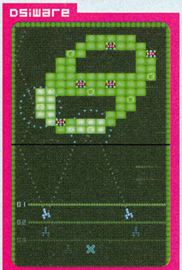
TOUCH SOLITAIRE

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: CARD
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 200

Anyone yearning for a straight digital dealer will crook an eyebrow when given the choice between "easy" and "hard" games of Spider and Klondike (the offerings here). But if you can get past that, you'll find a polished, if spartan, implementation of these loner classics. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWare



TRAJECTILE

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

With the retro-chic look of an Art Style game, Trajectile plays like a modified version of Arkanoid. The basic concept (aim and launch missiles) belies the devious challenge offered up through the level design. A ton of stages and a low price make this a must-buy. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWare

JENNY
DANNY
JADE
ROSE
UNO

UNO

PUBLISHER: GAMELOFT
GENRE: CARD
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

UNO may not be the most intellectually stimulating card game out there, but its simple rules and fast pace make it extremely fun to play. Not surprisingly, the game shines in multiplayer mode, so hooray for Wi-Fi support. Download Play would have been nice, though. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWare

US States
Time: 23:04
NEW YORK
MONTANA
GEORGIA
FLORIDA
TEXAS
CALIFORNIA
WYOMING
WASHINGTON
IDAHO
ILLINOIS
IOWA
KANSAS
VERMONT
MAINE

WORD SEARCHER

PUBLISHER: DIGITAL LEISURE
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

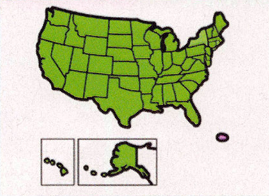
Word Searcher is basically the same game as its WiiWare counterpart (which was released a few months ago), only slightly improved thanks to the addition of touch-screen controls. It delivers what it promises (traditional word searches), and there are 100 categories to choose from, but that isn't exactly compelling stuff. This is probably best saved for a long car trip when you don't have a pencil-and-paper word search handy. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

SURVEY SAYS...

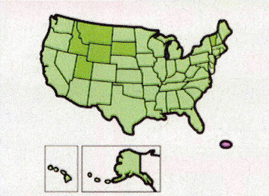
RECENT RESULTS from the EVERYBODY VOTES CHANNEL

When ordering food at a restaurant, are you fussy with your order?	
Sometimes: 36.6%	Usually Not: 63.4%



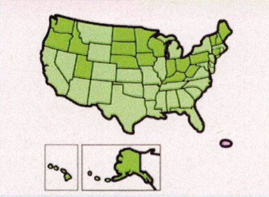
It's a solid win for non-picky eaters everywhere...except in Puerto Rico.

Which type of mint freshens your breath best?	
Peppermint: 45.3%	Spearmint: 54.7%



Puerto Rico is also the only place where peppermint freshens breath better than spearmint.

Which of these do you think you use more often?	
Stapler: 41.9%	Tape: 58.1%



And, coincidentally, staplers are all the rage in Puerto Rico. Who'd have guessed?

RED STEEL® 2

"FINALLY, wielding a sword in a Wii game feels as real as you'd always dreamed!"
– Nintendo Power

DESIGNED EXCLUSIVELY FOR Wii MotionPlus™

Standard Game and Wii MotionPlus™ Bundle
AVAILABLE ON MARCH 23

REDSTEEL2.COM

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Blood
Mild Language
Mild Suggestive Themes
Violence

Wii MotionPlus™ accessory sold separately.

REQUIRES
Wii MotionPlus™
Sold separately
Wii
ign.com
BEST OF E3
WINNER
2009
UBISOFT

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PREVIEWS

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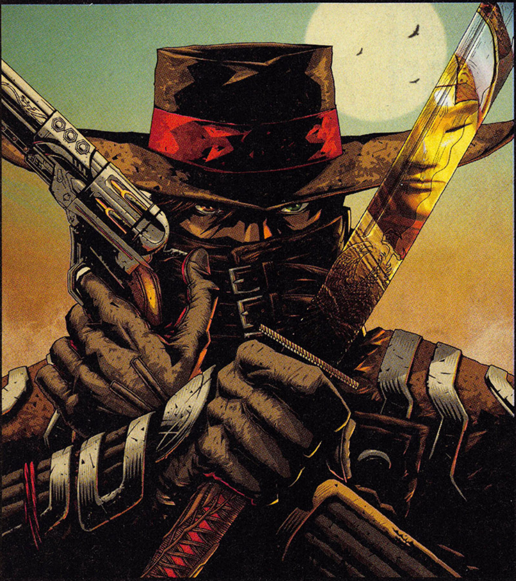
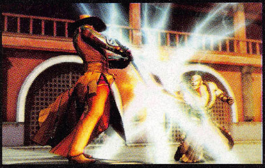
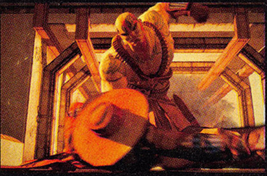




Despite never saying anything, the nameless hero sure rubs people the wrong way.



RED STEEL 2

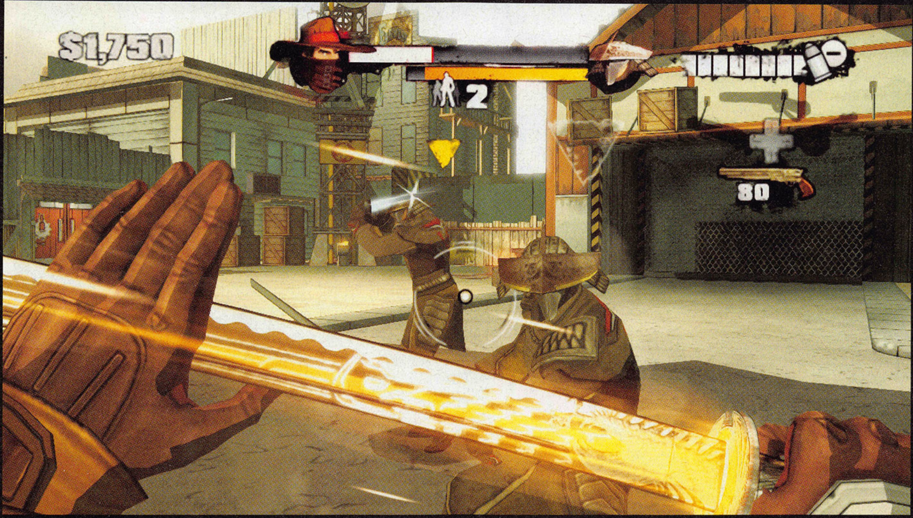
We slay a thousand ninja bandidos to put the game's highly anticipated Wii MotionPlus sword controls to the test.

RED STEEL 2 has a lot to live up to. Not only must it deliver on its promise to finally provide the realistic sword control players have dreamed of since the Wii console's debut, but it has to overcome the lukewarm reception given to the series's first installment *and* make up for the long drought of games that utilize the Wii MotionPlus accessory. We've been dying to dig deep into the game to see if it achieves those goals, and this month we finally got our chance. Although our work-in-progress version isn't sufficiently polished for us to definitively say Ubisoft has risen to every challenge, we like a lot of what we see.

First off, the controls. While not quite perfect, they work pretty much as advertised. When you swing the Wii Remote controller in any direction, your movement is almost instantly matched onscreen with a sword slash at the exact same angle. Swinging harder produces a more powerful strike, and thrusting the remote toward the TV results in a forward stab. All of these motions are fluid and come off just as you'd expect them to, but the actions feel different than the swordplay in Wii Sports Resort, which seems a bit more 1:1—that is, the movements of your Wii Remote are more accurately mirrored on the screen. This is largely because in Resort your sword is always visible; you can watch it twist and turn in real time as you move your arm. Conversely, in Red Steel 2 you see your sword only when it makes a straight slash across the screen.

Another noteworthy difference between the two games is that the style of swordfighting in Resort requires you to swing from varying angles and heights to strike an opponent where he has left himself open. In Red Steel 2, it usually doesn't matter where you swing your sword unless you're triggering a special move. So, though the game tracks the angles of your strikes perfectly, it largely doesn't matter, which kind of defeats the point.

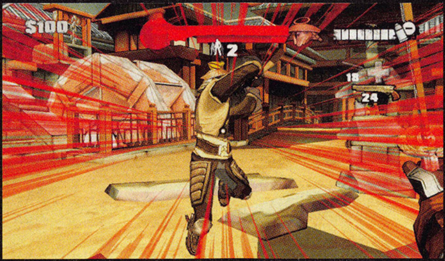
When you put all of these factors together, Wii Sports Resort is closer to the kind of sword control that many of

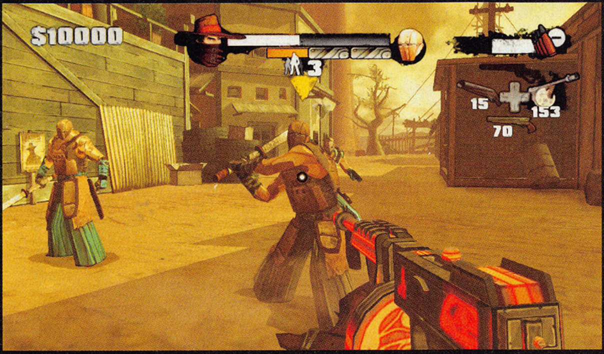


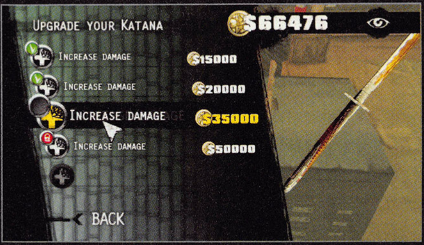
us had in mind, where you feel like you're gripping a make-believe sword by holding the Wii Remote. Of course, Red Steel 2 is a full-sized game with tons more moves and features, and still makes very good use of the Wii MotionPlus for the kind of experience it presents. At this point we don't endorse one game's sword controls over the other, but it's important to understand the distinction between the two.

Holding the A Button puts you into parry mode, where you hold your sword vertically or horizontally to deflect incoming melee attacks, or even bullets. You can dash forward, backward, or to the sides by tapping A while holding the Nunchuk controller's Control Stick in the direction you want to go. This move can be combined with a forward thrust of the remote for a lunging attack, or a second press of the A button will send you from a dash to a leap with a flying downward slash. Holding the A and B Buttons will charge up the most powerful attacks, which are then performed by swinging the remote in a certain direction (up, for example, if you want to knock an enemy high into the air). There are many more advanced moves and combinations, which are all

[Below] While the game focuses mainly on swordplay, your trigger finger will still get plenty of exercise.



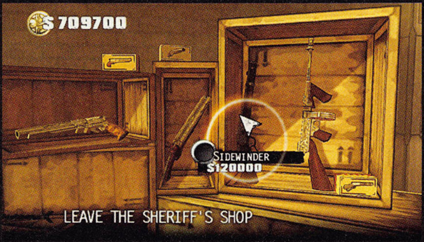



UPGRADE YOUR KATANA
$66476
INCREASE DAMAGE
$15000
INCREASE DAMAGE
$20000
INCREASE DAMAGE
$35000
INCREASE DAMAGE
$50000
BACK

taught to you for a price.

Money can also be spent on guns. In addition to the starting pistol, you can swap between a shotgun, a rifle, and a submachine gun by pressing different directions on the Wii Remote's Control Pad. Furthermore, you can purchase upgrades for guns and swords to improve attributes such as damage, rate of fire, magazine capacity, and accuracy. Switching from a sword to a gun is dead-easy—just aim the remote at the screen and press B to fire as you would in most other Wii first-person shooting games. Because of Wii MotionPlus, the game always knows where the remote is pointed, even when it isn't aimed at the screen. This provides a small but welcome improvement to movement, making it easier to turn.

Red Steel 2's structure is somewhat similar to Metroid's: the game world consists of many rooms and areas that are connected by doors, some of which can't be entered when you first come across them. You typically find a safe house, talk to the support character that resides there, learn a new move or upgrade your arsenal, then accept a new mission and follow the onscreen map to your next target. Along the way you encounter packs of up to six enemies, which include sword- or gun-wielding henchmen, big hammer-swinging thugs, or, later on, deadlier foes like ninjas. You occasionally fight a boss or engage in quick-time events, which are action-heavy cinema scenes that prompt you to quickly press a button at key moments (like in the arcade classic Dragon's Lair).

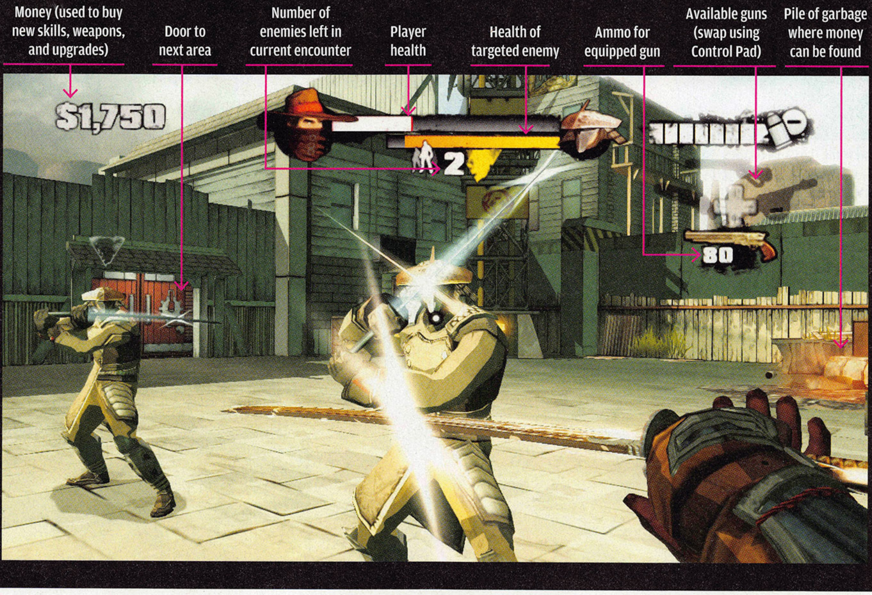

$709700
SIDEWINDER
$120000
LEAVE THE SHERIFF'S SHOP

The graphic-novel-inspired visuals are great; the loud colors and bleached lighting give a unique sunburned feel to the Tokyo-meets-Reno town of Caldera. There isn't much of a story—basically, bad guys are running the town and you need to kick them all out, but that's all the reason you need to justify a wild sword-swinging rampage.

Check back soon for the final word on just how close Red Steel 2 comes to reaching its lofty goals. —**CHRIS SL.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PARIS
RELEASE: MARCH 2010

SAMURAI SHOWDOWN: Take a detailed look at what you'll see in the heat of battle.


Money (used to buy new skills, weapons, and upgrades)
Door to next area
Number of enemies left in current encounter
Player health
Health of targeted enemy
Ammo for equipped gun
Available guns (swap using Control Pad)
Pile of garbage where money can be found
$1,750
2
80

INFINITE SPACE

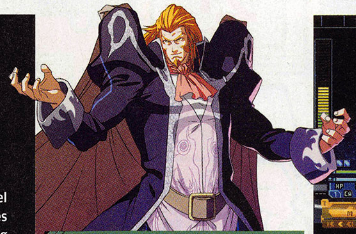
MadWorld's makers take strategy games to the final frontier.

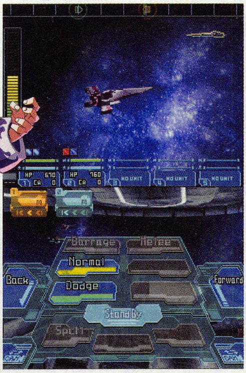
Inspired by the classic Arthur C. Clarke sci-fi novel *Childhood's End*, Infinite Space is a strategy RPG the likes of which has never been seen on DS. Rather than placing a bunch of sprite spaceships on a hexagonal battlefield, this game puts you at the helm of a ship created from hundreds of parts and thrusts you into tense, real-time battles and on-foot ship commandeering.

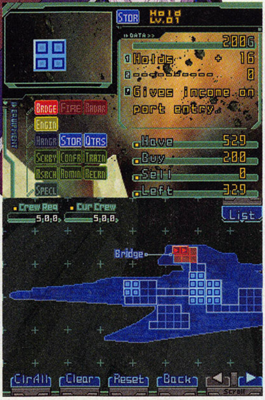
While in space, combat revolves around moving your ship into range of enemy vessels, taking into account your weapons' varying capabilities, then firing based on how much of your "command gauge" is available to commit to the attack. Your ship's bridge can be manned by a variety of crew members whose unique attributes aid in battle. Once the large ships have been blasted into submission, you enter into a more traditional RPG scenario and fight your way to the bridge.

It's a unique concept, and given PlatinumGames's history with those (see MadWorld) we're excited to see how this one ends up. —**RANDY N.**

DS PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **PLATINUMGAMES/ NUDE MAKER** RELEASE: **MARCH 2010**



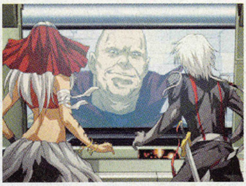

HP 670
HP 760
NO UNIT
NO UNIT
NO UNIT
Barrage
Melee
Normal
Dodge
Back
Forward
Stand By
Spcl


STOR
Hold Lv.01
DATA>>
2006
Holds + 16
0

Gives income on port entry.

EQUIPMENT
BRDGE FIRE RADAR
ENGIN
HANGR STOR QTRS
SCKBY CONFR TRAIN
RSRCH ADMIN RECRN
SPECL
Have 529
Buy 200
Sell 0
Left 329
Crew Req 5,8,8
Cur Crew 5,8,8
List
Bridge
ClrAll
Clear
Reset
Back
Scroll

[Left] If that's not geek heaven, we don't know what is. [Below] The game's story unfolds via manga-style cut-scenes.



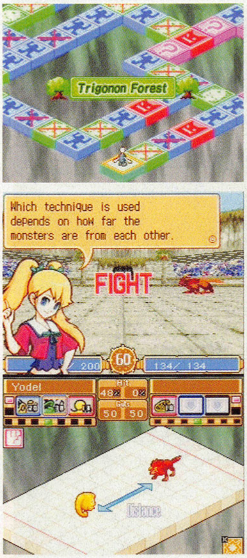
MONSTER RANCHER DS

Scribble a shape, make a monster.

Though it's more of a household name in Japan than in the States, Monster Rancher, Tecmo's answer to Pokémon, has carved out a niche among creature collectors. The focus is on creating monsters and training them for tournaments. The touch screen becomes a Magic Field when you enter the game's Academy. You conjure a monster by drawing a picture or by speaking into the DS microphone, then take it back to your ranch and give it stat-building items and lessons or combine it with another monster in the lab to develop a new breed. The creature cast includes Monster Rancher favorites such as Monolith, Mocchi, and Gali.

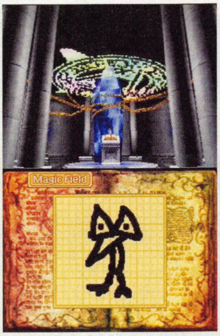
In addition to pumping up little beasts through training exercises, you can put them through a drill at the Guild, which amounts to a bizarre dice-driven board game in a virtual world. Tournament battles take place on an open field where you can position your monster at a distance from the enemy that exploits your monster's weapons-range strengths and the enemy's weaknesses. Meet up with another rancher locally or via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection to battle and breed online. —**GEORGE S.**

DS PUBLISHER: **TECMO** DEVELOPER: **CING** RELEASE: **MARCH 2010**


Trigonon Forest

Which technique is used depends on how far the monsters are from each other.

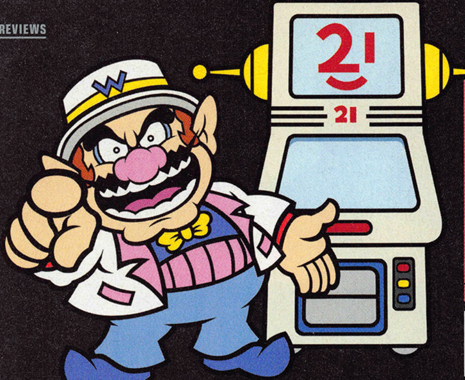
FIGHT
200
60
134/ 134
Yodel
48
0
50
50
Distance

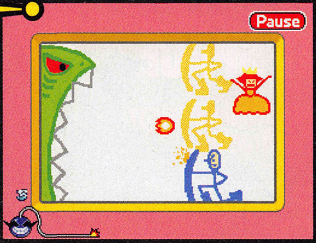

Magic Field

[Above] Draw a picture in the Magic Field. What creature comes out is anybody's guess.

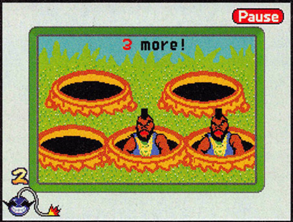
My name is Pharma, and I run the Lab here.

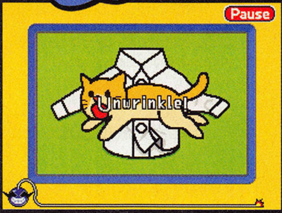
Lab
Guide
Shop

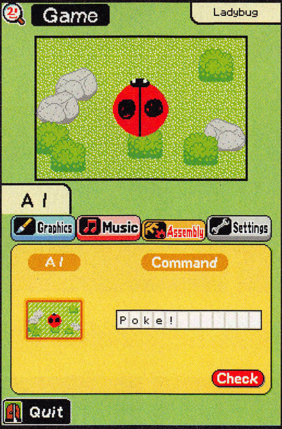


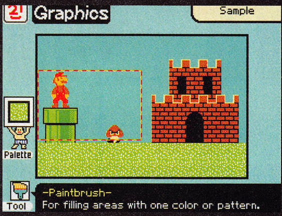


[Right] You, too, can make games that are this rad.

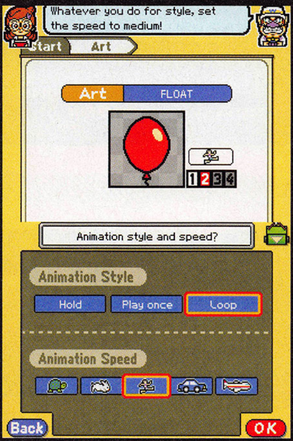








-Paintbrush-
For filling areas with one color or pattern.


Whatever you do for style, set the speed to medium!

Animation style and speed?

WARIOWARE D.I.Y.

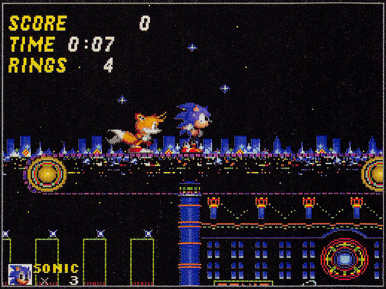
When you want something done, do it yourself!

FLEDGING GAME DESIGNERS: WarioWare D.I.Y. is your dream come true. This title gives you everything you need to create your own WarioWare microgames from the ground up: you can make the backgrounds, the characters, the objects, the action, the music, and the sound effects, and determine how it all goes together. In short, if you've ever wanted to create your own video game, this is for you.

But don't worry; Wario may be greedy and lazy, but he isn't gonna make you do *all* the work. His pals and Dr. Crygor's SuperMakerMatic21 machine are there to help you along. Fun, well-designed (and funny) tutorials are included to teach you the ropes, and there are tons of tools to help you get the job done. Art skills aren't up to par? Then just use the stamps to create rocks, plants, clouds, or whatever background elements you need (even objects from Super Mario Bros.). Can't compose music if your life depended on it? Then simply hum into the microphone to have your tune transformed into a usable song, or have the game's maestro generate a track based on the mood and tempo you want to create. Don't really care about game design? Then just create the artwork for several otherwise-finished microgames. You also have the option of simply crafting standalone comics or music if you wish.

There's plenty of premade action, as well. Returning WarioWare characters Mona, Jimmy T., Ashley, Orbulon, and 9-Volt all have their own microgames to share with you (including a nose-picking game), and you can explore them from the inside to see how they're made and then apply that knowledge to your own creations. But perhaps best of all is the fact that you'll be able to share your handiwork with friends via local wireless, and with the rest of the gaming community over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and download their games in return. You can even play your games on Wii using WarioWare D.I.Y. Showcase for WiiWare (see pg. 14). The possibilities are truly endless. —**CHRIS H.**

DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO **DEVELOPER:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
RELEASE: MARCH 2010


SCORE 0
TIME 0:07
RINGS 4
SONIC × 3

SONIC CLASSIC COLLECTION

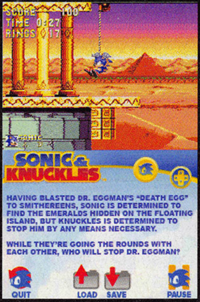
The Blue Blur returns to his roots.

NEARLY TWO DECADES after Sonic first dashed onto the scene, the blue hedgehog is still running strong. But some young players missed out on what many consider Sonic's prime, and a vocal contingent of older gamers wants to return to the days before the hedgehog swung a sword or transformed into a werebeast. Sega has the just the thing for both of these camps: Sonic Classic Collection.

As the name implies, this DS card has all of the mainline 16-bit-era Sonic titles: the first three original Sonic the Hedgehog games, plus Sonic & Knuckles. Not much has changed gameplaywise in these four top-notch platformers, meaning you get to (re-)experience Sonic's many battles with Dr. Robotnik, as well as the introductions of Tails and Knuckles. Speaking of the latter character, you can play both Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and 3 as the crimson echidna; because he has the ability to climb walls, Knuckles is granted access to areas in Sonic 2 and 3 that Sonic and Tails can't reach. (You just select the Knuckles versions of those titles at the main menu.)

Not *everything* is the same, though; for instance, you can now save your progress (the stage and act you last played, at least). And you can view the old-school illustrations of Sonic and friends, which is a welcome addition for die-hard fans. (It's especially interesting to see how the Sonic character design evolved from the pot-bellied hedgehog of the Sega Genesis era to the slimmer Sonic we have today.) Unfortunately, we did notice some frame-rate issues in the preview version we played—although the originals weren't exactly perfect in this regard either. Besides, you get the four best Sonic games in one portable package—that's a value that's hard to beat. —**JUSTIN C.**

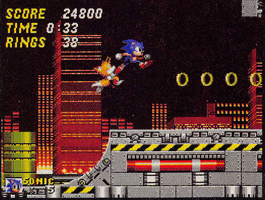
DS PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **SONIC TEAM/THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY** RELEASE: **MARCH 2010**


SCORE 100
TIME 0:27
RINGS 17
SONIC & KNUCKLES
QUIT
LOAD
SAVE
PAUSE

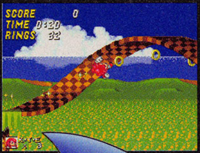
HAVING BLASTED DR. EGGMAN'S "DEATH EGG" TO SMITHEREENS, SONIC IS DETERMINED TO FIND THE EMERALDS HIDDEN ON THE FLOATING ISLAND, BUT KNUCKLES IS DETERMINED TO STOP HIM BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.

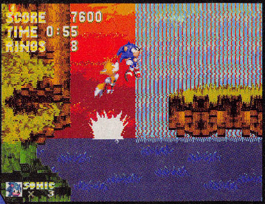
WHILE THEY'RE GOING THE ROUNDS WITH EACH OTHER, WHO WILL STOP DR. EGGMAN?

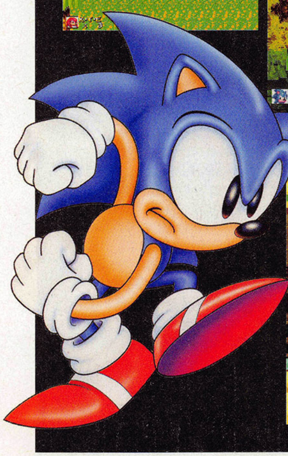
SCORE 100
TIME 0:06
RINGS 0
SONIC × 3

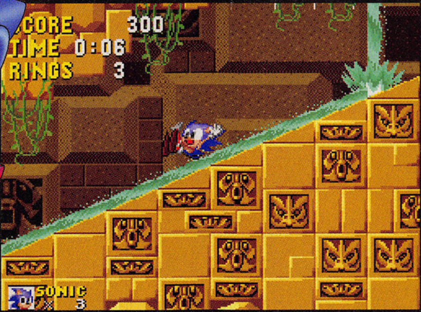

SCORE 24800
TIME 0:33
RINGS 38
SONIC × 5

[Below] Blast processing meets lock-on technology as Knuckles invades Sonic the Hedgehog 2!


SCORE 0
TIME 0:20
RINGS 32
K'TE × 3


SCORE 7600
TIME 0:55
RINGS 8
SONIC × 3




SCORE 300
TIME 0:06
RINGS 3
SONIC × 3

SONIC RINGS 86
TOTAL 104
"TAILS" RINGS 18

SCORE 700
TIME 1:54
RINGS 73
K'TE

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: STRANGE JOURNEY

A dungeon by any other name is just as dangerous.

"DUNGEON CRAWL" is not a term that needs to be taken very literally. Too often it is, and we wind up with games set in yet another shambling-corpse-of-Gary Gygax fantasy cave.

Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey is a dungeon crawl in the less-literal sense. Under the skin, this M-rated title is the heir to Etrian Odyssey, Atlus's cult homage to ancient PC dungeon hacks—the basic visual presentation and combat mechanics are almost exactly the same. What's different? Well, the story moves a bit quicker, it has the famous SMT demon-summoning system added...oh, and the hero is a gun-toting future commando on a mission to blast his way through a psychedelic parallel dimension.

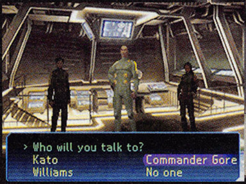
Atlus has made a specialty of mixing familiar gameplay with settings you'd never expect. Witness the Persona RPGs, modern-day horror stories starring teams of Japanese high-school kids. Strange Journey is built according to the same philosophy. Thanks to the Megami Tensei science-fiction makeover, even simple aspects of gameplay feel completely different from the norm.

Consider how building new items and equipment works. In a more traditional game, to synthesize new items, you'd take some eye of newt and tongue of toad to the local alchemist's cooking pot (or something along those lines). In Strange Journey, you dig up rare elements called Forma and bring them to the science lab on the commando team's mothership, where a goofball engineer with a funny redneck accent develops new weapons and Sub-Apps for your supertech combat suit. Mechanically, they're the same game system, but the new way of presenting it makes it fresh and unusual.

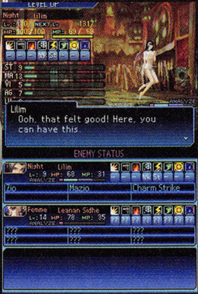
The same goes for Strange Journey's visuals, which are the farthest thing from drab, gray caverns full of goblins and orcs. One gets the impression that Atlus employs artists who bore easily. Strange Journey's basic setting appears to have been conceived to let them come up with whatever crazy backgrounds they wanted to: everything from a smoking WWII battlefield to freezing caves of ice to surreal, colorful cityscapes. Does the game world have a reason for looking so weird? Well, it might and it might not, but either way, it's never boring.

"Boring" is a tag often slapped on this kind of game. Strange Journey looks to prove that a dungeon crawl doesn't have to be dull—that, in fact, there's very little it *has* to be at all. —**DAVID S.**

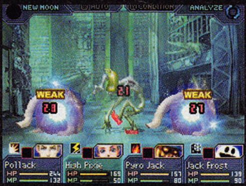
DEVELOPER: ATLUS
DS **PUBLISHER: ATLUS**
RELEASE: MARCH 2010



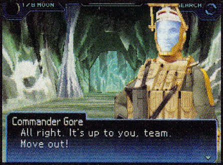
> Who will you talk to?
Kato
Williams
Commander Gore
No one


LEVEL UP
Night Lilim
Lv: 10 NEXT Lv 1317
HP: 100/100 MP: 63/ 63
Wk St
ST 9
MA 13
VI 5
AG 7
ANALYZE
ENEMY STATUS
Night Lilim
Lv: 9 HP: 68 MP: 31
ANALYZE
Wk St
Zio
Mazio
Charm Strike
Femme Leanan Sidhe
Lv: 14 HP: 78 MP: 35
ANALYZE
???

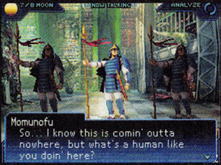
Lilim
Ooh, that felt good! Here, you can have this.


NEW MOON
AUTO
CONDITION
ANALYZE
WEAK
20
21
WEAK
27
Pollack
HP 244
MP 132
High Pixie
HP 169
MP 50
Pyro Jack
HP 157
MP 80
Jack Frost
HP 139
MP 90

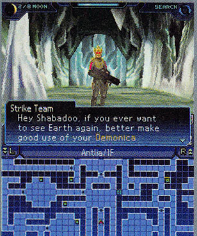
[Below] There's nothing quite like a friendly chat with a trio of demonic samurai.


1/8 MOON
SEARCH

Commander Gore
All right. It's up to you, team. Move out!


7/8 MOON
NOW TALKING
ANALYZE

Momunofu
So... I know this is comin' outta nowhere, but what's a human like you doin' here?

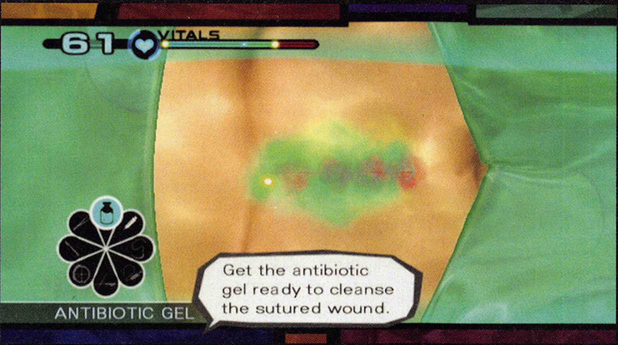

2/8 MOON
SEARCH
L
Antlia/1F
R
MISSION LOG
DEMONICA
ANALYZE
ICON HELP

Strike Team
Hey Shabadoo, if you ever want to see Earth again, better make good use of your Demonica

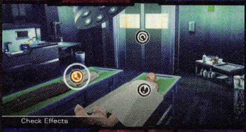
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Etrian Odyssey was famous for lacking an automapping feature. If you wanted a dungeon map, you drew it yourself. This was either a waste of time or a totally awesome ode to the old school, depending on how many fond memories you had of scratching away at sheets of graph paper during the days of The Bard's Tale.

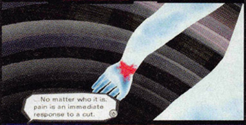
Strange Journey takes the exact opposite approach. By default, the dual-screen automatic area map and heads-up display are stuffed with useful data, and you can add even more—for instance, you can include a search mode that locates hidden items—by developing new Sub-Apps to upgrade the system.



Get the antibiotic gel ready to cleanse the sutured wound.



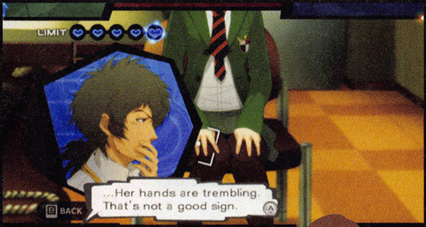
[Above] You can't bring the dead back to life, but you can find out who killed them.



...No matter who it is, pain is an immediate response to a cut.

TRAUMA TEAM

Way beyond the ER.



...Her hands are trembling. That's not a good sign.

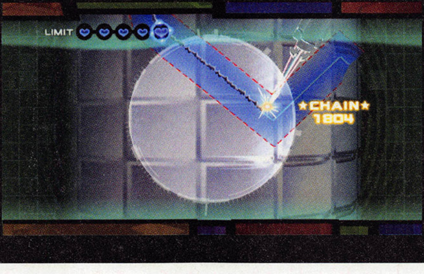
THE MORE WE see of Trauma Team, the more we realize just how much deeper and more diverse it is than its predecessors in the Trauma Center series. With six doctors and six medical specialties, there's plenty of variety—not only in the operations you perform, but also in the characters' personalities. In the surgery portions, for example, you'll play as a mysterious doctor with a criminal past—he's known only as CRS-01—and engage in fast-paced medical action by relying on a variety of gesture-controlled tools (a scalpel, forceps, sutures, a surgical laser, antibiotic gel, and more) that will be familiar to anybody who's played the Trauma Center games.

But the surgery segments only scratch the surface of the full-fledged hospital experience that is Trauma Team. At the other end of the spectrum is diagnosis, in which you take control of Dr. Gabriel Cunningham, the hospital's resident jerk. As Gabriel, you'll ask patients about their symptoms (and click on their responses to mark them if they seem abnormal), use a stethoscope to listen to patients' breathing and heartbeat, examine vital stats (such as heart rate, blood pressure, and hemoglobin levels), and more. Once you've got enough info you'll compare it to standardized data using your talking computer, RONI (think *Knight Rider* meets *House*), to determine what ails your patient.

Forensics, meanwhile, is so different from the other medical disciplines that it could stand alone as its own game. Playing as coroner Naomi Kimishima, you examine the deceased's body and personal possessions for clues about the cause of death, and you even get to search the place the body was found to gather additional info. In the first forensics episode, your autopsy reveals that what appears to be a clear-cut suicide is actually a murder, and as you delve further into the case you'll gets clues and hints on a variety of subjects. By combining clues, answering multiple-choice questions, listening to witness testimony, and gathering additional info from your analysis assistant, you'll piece together the true cause of death and discover the criminal behind it.

To add to the intrigue, what happens with one character frequently ties into another character's scenario; for example, the girl you diagnose in Gabriel's first chapter ends up being the first patient you operate on in the orthopedic-surgery (another of the six specialties) portion of the game. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: ATLUS
RELEASE: APRIL 2010



SAKURA WARS: SO LONG, MY LOVE

Robots! Romance! Singing! What more do you need?

IN CASE THE game's romantic subtitle didn't tip you off, there's a *heavy* anime influence at work in Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love. The animated intro, complete with the original Japanese lyrics and English subtitles, gives further evidence of this, and even the storyline revels in its anime roots. You play as Shinjiro Taiga, a 19-year-old Japanese boy who has been transferred to New York to work in that city's branch of the Combat Revue Star Division, a secret organization that protects the world from evil monsters and killer robots. And yes, the group *does* spend its off-hours performing musical theater.

The first hour or so of the game is spent meeting your associates, and you discover that not all of them are pleased to have some young kid on the team. Dialogue trees allow you to choose responses when people talk to you, and what you say determines how they will continue to react to you. It's prudent to get your teammates to understand what a valuable member you can be, as their feelings toward you affect the game later.

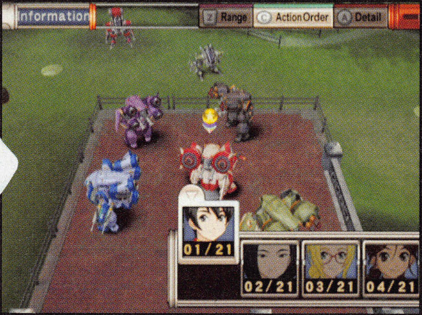
There's a lot of talk in the game about how the power of song and dance can help people in troubled times, and the Americans all seem very impressed by Shinjiro's enthusiastic "samurai spirit." The script can be shamelessly corny at times, but that just adds to the anime authenticity.

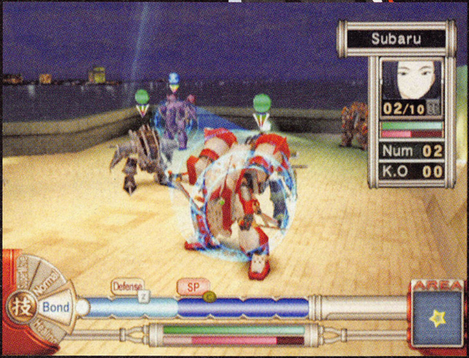
Once you've proven yourself to everyone, you will finally get a chance to participate in your first battle. After an elaborate suit-up sequence that features the crew launching from a giant crossbow that emerges from underneath the theater, Shinjiro finds himself piloting a Super Telekinetic Assault Robot (STAR), a giant mech that's armed to the robotic teeth.

During the turn-based battles, the STAR's ability to attack is directly related to its mobility. The less you move during your turn, the stronger your attack will be. Carefully positioning the STAR to inflict the maximum damage is a big part of the fights' strategy. Also, a strong bond with your teammates allows you to pull off an extremely powerful Joint Attack, so it definitely pays to play nice.

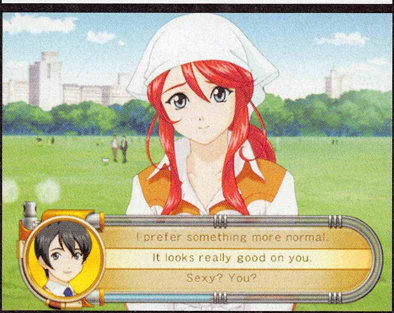
In addition to using its standard armaments, the STAR can transform into flight mode, allowing it to engage airborne enemies. These sorties function much like the land battles, except you have to maneuver in three dimensions. At the climax of your first fight, you take to the skies to bring down a giant robot that's hovering over the Statue of Liberty. It's a melodramatic fight that fits in perfectly with the game's anime feel. It's about time Sakura Wars got a chance to shine in the U.S. Its impending release is bound to make plenty of RPG fans very happy. —PHIL T.

Wii **PUBLISHER: NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: IDEA FACTORY
RELEASE: MARCH 2010

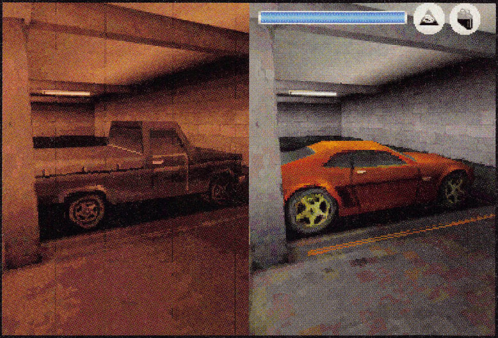




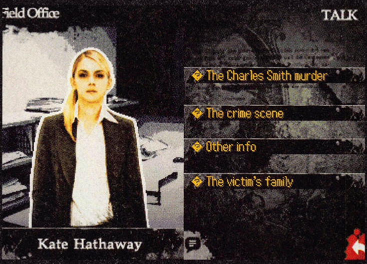
[Below] Nice guys finish first in this game—the more your teammates like you, the stronger your Joint Attacks will be.



I prefer something more normal.
It looks really good on you.
Sexy? You?



[Left] You're not seeing double; you're seeing into the past.



AGAIN

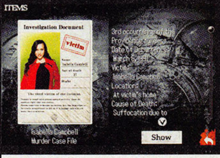
The Eye of Providence puts the "see" in CSI.

CHANCES ARE, you've never thought much about the Eye of Providence. You've undoubtedly seen it, though—it's the pyramid with the eye on the back of the one-dollar bill. It might not mean much to most people, but it's of great significance to FBI agent Jonathan Weaver (known as J to his friends). When J touches an Eye of Providence and visits a crime scene, he discovers that he can see into the past—an ability that comes in very useful as he attempts to solve a string of brutal murders. The murders have been unresolved for 19 years, but J finds himself smack-dab in the middle of the case when the killer apparently strikes again.

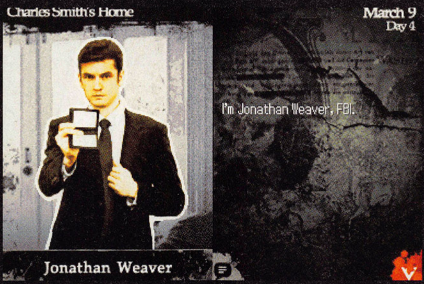
To get to the bottom of the Providence murders (referred to as such because the killer always left behind a clipped-out Eye of Providence), you'll have to put J's power to use. When it kicks in, you'll see an image of the past on one of the Nintendo DS system's screens and the present on the other. By exploring the 3-D environments, identifying differences between them, and re-creating the scene as it appeared in the past, you'll get visions that clue you in on what happened; after you've seen them all and determined the order in which they happen, you'll begin to learn the truth.

But supernatural abilities are only part of Again, the latest mystery adventure from the makers of Hotel Dusk. Again is very much cut from criminal-drama cloth, complete with TV-style bumpers between chapters and digitized actors portraying the sizable cast of characters. You'll get plenty of banter between J and his partner, Kate Hathaway, and even typical head-butting between the FBI and local law enforcement as they try to crack the case. You'll also get to engage in lots of investigative gameplay—questioning suspects, finding and using items, and visiting a variety of locales. Only by using every skill at your disposal will you unravel the mystery and find out the connection between the Providence murders and J's troubled past. —**CHRIS H.**

DS PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
DEVELOPER: **CING**
RELEASE: **MARCH 2010**

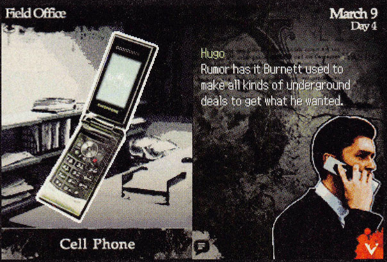


3rd occurrence of the Providence murders
Date of Occurrence:
March 5, 1991
Victim:
Isabella Campbell
Location:
At victim's home
Cause of Death:
Suffocation due to

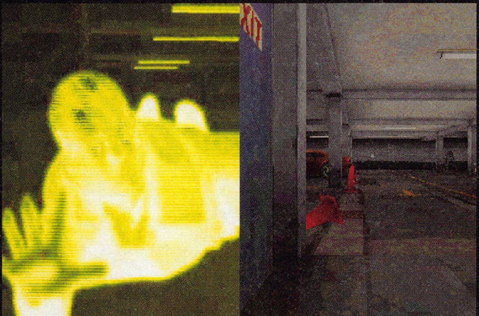


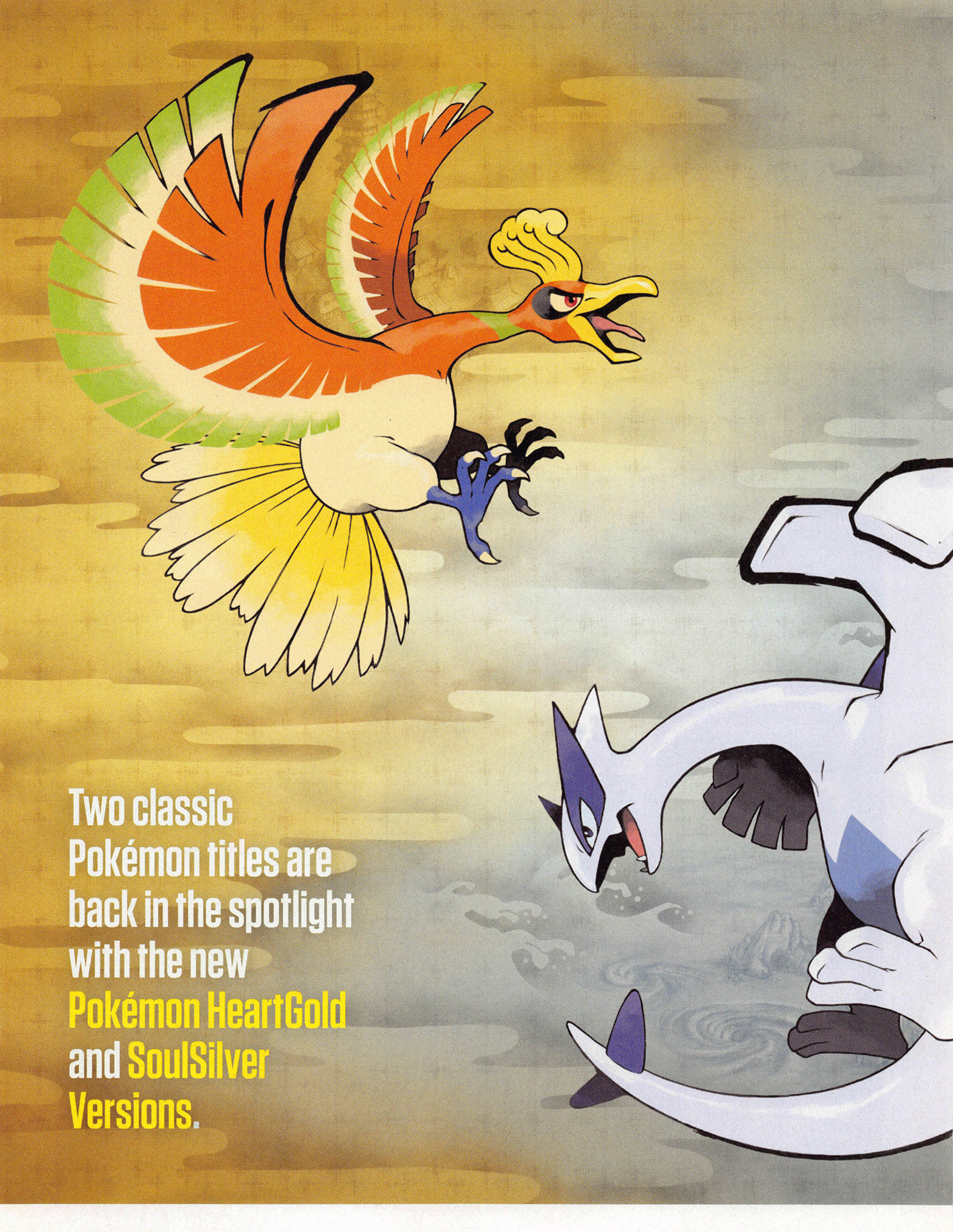
I'm Jonathan Weaver, FBI.

[Below] When you can't get the info you want through normal means, it's a good idea to call your friendly local reporter.



Hugo
Rumor has it Burnett used to make all kinds of underground deals to get what he wanted.





Two classic Pokémon titles are back in the spotlight with the new **Pokémon HeartGold** and **SoulSilver Versions**.

REMASTERED CLASSICS

It's hard to believe that the Pokémon franchise is well over 10 years old now. It seems like it was just yesterday that we were leaving our virtual homes and taking our first steps into the wilds of the Kanto region in the very first Pokémon adventure, and ever since then we've been attempting to catch 'em all in each successive installment.

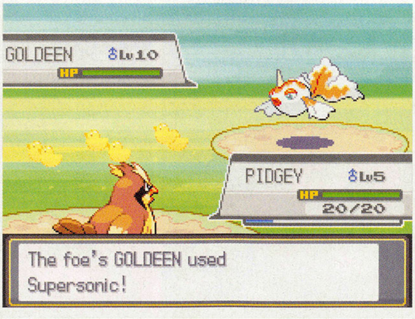
Considering how long the series has been around, it stands to reason that some fans never got a chance to experience the early titles. Consider Pokémon Red and Blue Versions, which were released on the original Game Boy in 1998. To ensure that today's players got to enjoy the start of the popular series, GAME FREAK, inc. reimagined those games in 2004 with the excellent Pokémon FireRed and LeafGreen Versions.

But what of the series's first true sequels, Pokémon Gold and Silver Versions? These two titles from 2000 are fondly remembered by fans, and those games are set to be rebuilt as Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions in March. Now new players will get to experience this classic quest through the Johto region, and longtime Pokémon devotees will get to relive one of their favorite adventures.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

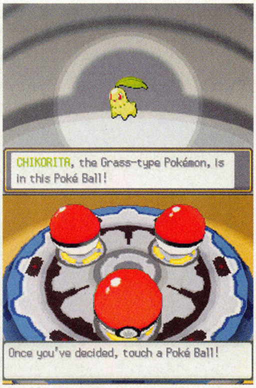
Players who have cut their teeth on recent titles like Pokémon Diamond, Pearl, and Platinum Versions will see the series's roots and explore some of the many innovations that Pokémon Gold and Silver Versions brought to the table. There were 100 new Pokémon introduced in the original games, and while many of them haven't been in the spotlight in recent years, Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions allow such popular Pokémon as Chikorita, Cyndaquil, Totodile, Marill, Pichu, Togepi, and more to shine again.

Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions also let players relive the first appearances of



The foe's GOLDEEN used Supersonic!

[Above] The Supersonic move can cause its victims to become confused. It also proves that even the Tiny Bird Pokémon see spinning, tweeting birds when they become dizzy.



CHIKORITA, the Grass-type Pokémon, is in this Poké Ball!

Once you've decided, touch a Poké Ball!

BY PHIL THEOBALD

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: GAME FREAK inc. RELEASE: MARCH 14, 2010 DS

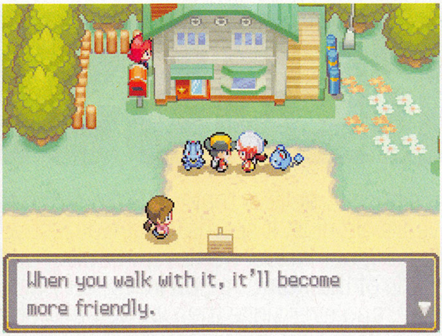
Steel-type and Dark-type Pokémon. Dark-types, of course, were welcomed especially warmly; their techniques provided a powerful counter to the arguably overpowered Psychic-type Pokémon.

In addition, you can re-experience now-common features like a real-time clock that dictates when certain Pokémon appear, the ability for a Pokémon to hold items, and the always-popular Pokémon Day Care, where you can breed Pokémon. (The Pokémon Eggs that result from the breeding process must then be carried around until they eventually hatch into a lovable new party member.)

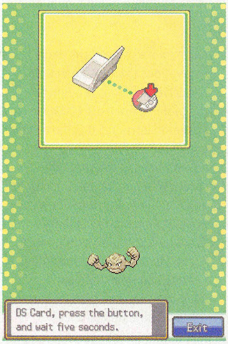
Just like in other adventures, you're given a Pokédex to keep track of your Pokémon and their stats. In Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions, you also have access to the Pokégear, an extremely handy multiuse device that is upgraded as you explore. The Pokégear's functionality includes displaying the world map and acting as a phone, allowing you to make and receive calls from in-game characters. Some may call with useful advice, and on occasion Pokémon Trainers that you have defeated in battle will call to request a rematch.

Rematches against computer opponents are great, but any Pokémon Trainer worth his salt never shies away from a match against a human opponent. Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions allow you to wirelessly battle against people in the same room or across the world thanks to Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. In order to be a true champion, you need to build a perfect Pokémon team, consisting of a balanced

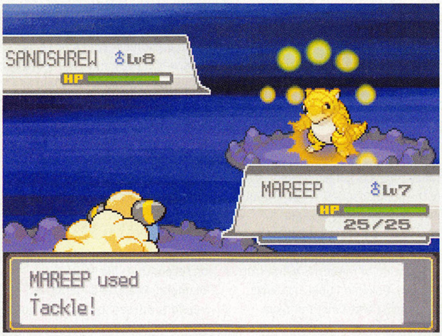
[Above] With the Pokéwalker, you'll never be far from your Pokémon. Just be careful when carrying a Pikachu in your pocket -- they can shock.



When you walk with it, it'll become more friendly.

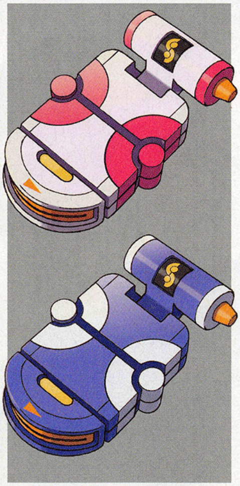


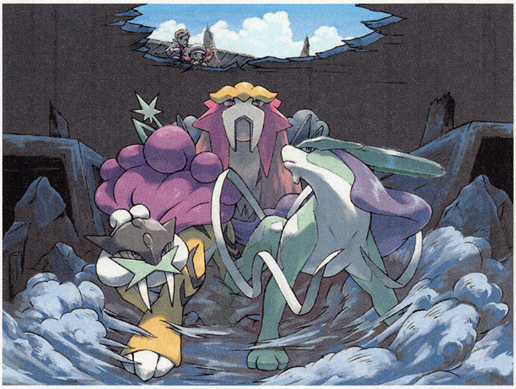
DS Card, press the button, and wait five seconds.



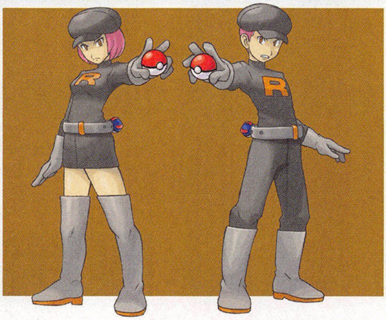
MAREEP used Tackle!

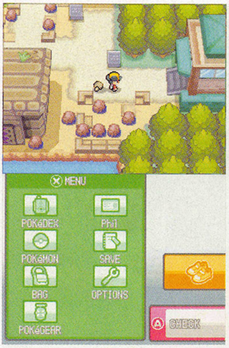
[Below] Cell phones are out. The cool kids carry Pokégears these days.





[Left] Raikou, Entei, and Suicune form the Legendary Trio. [Below] Team Rocket is trouble.



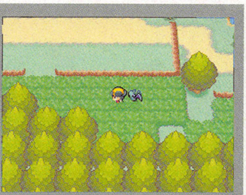


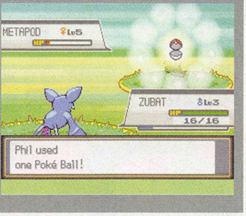
Pokémon Basics: CATCH

To catch a Pokémon, you need to find one in the wild. Don't be afraid to hang out in the tall grass that grows throughout Johto. Your footsteps will flush out Pokémon, sending you into battles.

Battles against wild Pokémon are just like matches against Trainers, but if you wish to capture the Pokémon, you must take care to not make it faint. The trick is to lower the wild Pokémon's Hit Points as much as possible without depleting them all the way. Once its energy is low enough (ideally, its energy bar will turn red), select a Poké Ball from your bag. You will automatically toss the Poké Ball at the Pokémon, and if all goes well, you will catch it. At this point, the Pokémon's data will be added to your Pokédex and you'll have the option to give it a nickname.

Sometimes a Pokémon will break free of a Poké Ball before you've caught it. If this is a problem for you, try using higher grades of Poké Balls. You can also paralyze wild Pokémon or put them to sleep before attempting the catch to tip the odds in your favor.





Phil used
one Poké Ball!

group of Pokémon with powerful moves. If you prefer your multiplayer experiences to be less aggressive, you can opt to trade your Pokémon with another player. It's easy to do, and it's a fun way to collect more Pokémon.

Before you begin trading, though, take note of which version of the game you have. Although Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions are very similar in design, there are a few important differences between the two. Mainly, certain Pokémon are exclusive to each one. It's always good to coordinate with a friend so that you each get different versions of the game. That way, it's even easier to trade for the Pokémon that don't show up in the wild in your version.

NEW AND IMPROVED

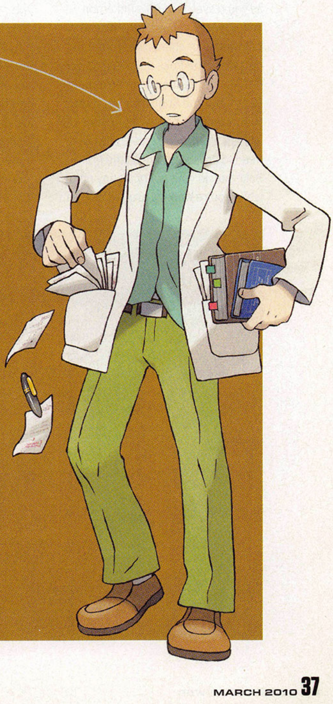
A lot of this will sound familiar to Pokémon veterans, but Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions include a plethora of brand-new features as well, expanding the gameplay in exciting new directions. Certainly the most noticeable changes are the greatly enhanced graphics and sound. The 3-D graphics, updated soundtrack, and improved ambient noises (which lets you hear small details like crashing waves or your footsteps through grass) make Johto feel more alive than ever before.

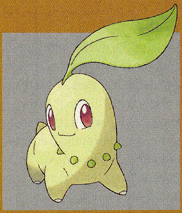
Normally, your Pokémon are safely stored within their Poké Balls

I CHOOSE YOU!

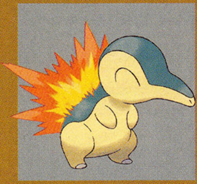
At the start of your journey, you meet **Professor Elm**, a famed researcher in the field of Pokémon evolution. He asks you to go visit a friend of his, the enigmatically named Mr. Pokémon. Before setting out on this errand, the professor allows you to choose your first Pokémon from the three in his lab.

The three here each have their own type, which gives them certain advantages and disadvantages over other Pokémon during battle. A Water-type Pokémon, for example, is powerful against Fire-type attacks. Deciding which Pokémon is best for you really comes down to personal preference, but keep in mind that your Pokémon's type will play a large role in the difficulty of battles against opponents early in the game.

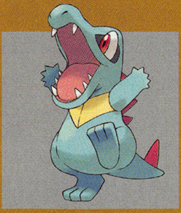




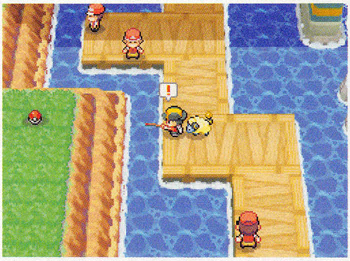
Chikorita
Grass-type
STRONG AGAINST: Water-, Ground-, and Rock-type
WEAK AGAINST: Ice-, Fire-, Flying-, Bug-, and Poison-type attacks



Cyndaquil
Fire-type
STRONG AGAINST: Grass-, Bug-, Ice-, and Steel-type
WEAK AGAINST: Water-, Ground-, and Rock-type attacks



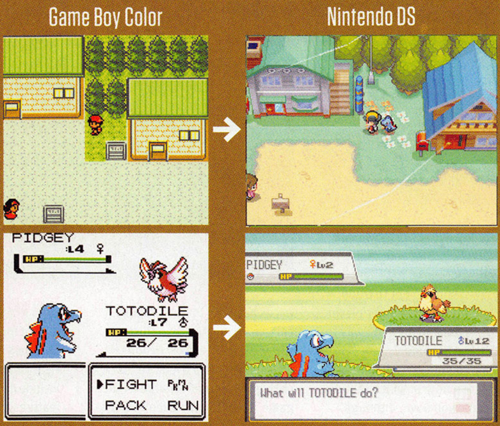
Totodile
Water-type
STRONG AGAINST: Fire-, Rock-, and Ground-type
WEAK AGAINST: Grass- and Electric-type attacks



[Above] Quick reflexes are required while fishing. If you're too slow, Water-type Pokémon will get away.

OLD VS. NEW

The most obvious new feature that Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions have over their predecessors is their beautifully updated look. Check out what more than a decade's worth of graphical enhancements can do for a game.



What will TOTODILE do?

as you travel. In 1999's Pokémon Yellow version, however, Pikachu followed your character around outside of the Poké Ball. That feature has been expanded on in Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions. Now any of the games' Pokémon will tag along behind you; all you need to do is set them as the first Pokémon in your party. At any point while you're walking around, you can interact with that Pokémon to see how it feels.

Speaking of Poké Balls, Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions see the return of Apricorns. The multicolored, collectible Apricorns can be crafted into rare Poké Balls that specialize in capturing certain types of Pokémon. A Lure Ball, for example, is great for catching a Pokémon that you've reeled in with a fishing rod.

Since these new games are designed specifically for the Nintendo DS system, they take full advantage of the handheld's touch screen. Battles can be fought with a few taps of the stylus, and organizing your inventory and Pokémon collection are significantly easier now. One new feature that is surprisingly convenient is the ability to toggle your character's Running Shoes with a touch-screen button. No longer do you have to constantly hold down the B Button to run around the region.

There are more-substantial new features as well. Some of the Pokémon from recent titles make appearances here, giving you even more to work toward as you strive to complete your Pokédex. There are even a few new areas to explore and some top-secret features and minigames that we can't reveal.

WALK IT OUT

Perhaps the most significant new addition to Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions is the Pokéwalker. This small device allows you to wirelessly transfer one of your Pokémon from the Nintendo DS game into it. The Pokémon will then travel along a Route while you walk around in the real world. Now you can play with your favorite Pokémon even when you don't have your Nintendo DS system nearby. As you walk, your steps generate Watts in the Pokéwalker, and those Watts can be transferred into Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions to unlock new Routes.

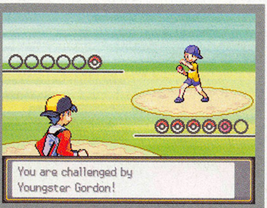
The Watts can also be used in the

Pokémon Basics: BATTLE

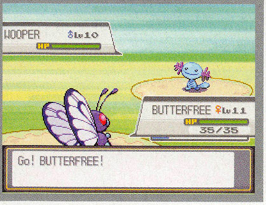
Although you will encounter countless wild Pokémon during your quest, you'll also face off against a host of Pokémon Trainers. If a fellow Trainer catches you in his sights, he or she will immediately challenge you to a battle. On the challenge screen, you can see how many Poké Balls your opponent has, which will tell you how many Pokémon you must defeat to win the battle.

During the match, you want to have a type advantage over your opponent, so select your Pokémon and their moves carefully. Keep a watchful eye on your Pokémon's health, and don't be afraid to use healing Potions when they're in trouble. If your Pokémon is seriously outmatched, you can call it out of battle and send in a replacement.

Also, don't waste your time trying to capture an opponent's Pokémon—as with all Pokémon Versions, you'll need to find your own Pokémon.



You are challenged by Youngster Gordon!

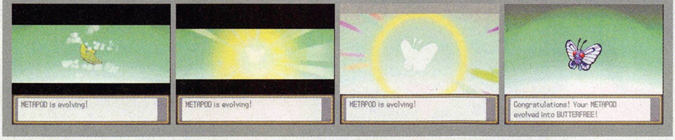


Go! BUTTERFREE!

Pokémon Basics: EVOLUTION

As you battle with your Pokémon, they will gain experience, causing them to level up. Most Pokémon will evolve when they reach a certain level, granting them a new appearance and higher stats. In addition, certain Pokémon must evolve through the use of an evolutionary stone, whereas others won't evolve until they have been traded with another player. There are other methods as well, so be sure to experiment.

You can also cancel a Pokémon's Evolution if you don't want it to take on a new form. Although this tends to keep the Pokémon's overall stats lower, an unevolved Pokémon usually learns more-powerful moves faster than its evolved form.

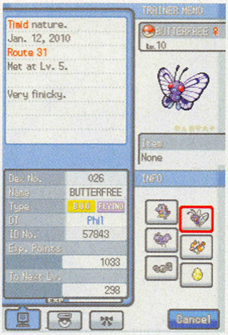


METAPOD is evolving!

METAPOD is evolving!

METAPOD is evolving!

Congratulations! Your METAPOD evolved into BUTTERFREE!



Timid nature.
Jan. 12, 2010
Route 31
Met at Lv. 5.

Very finicky.

BUTTERFREE ♀
Lv. 10

Item: None

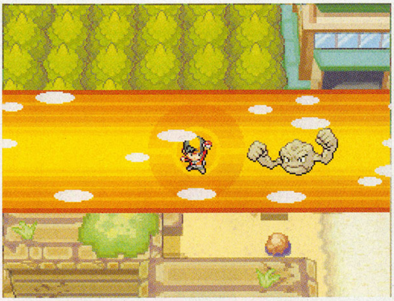
Dex No.	026
Name	BUTTERFREE
Type	BUG FLYING
OT	Phil
ID No.	57843
Exp. Points	1033
To Next Lv.	298

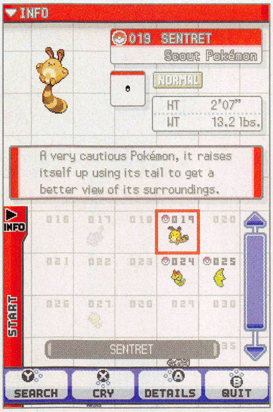
Pokéwalker to find items or catch wild Pokémon. Any items that you earn or Pokémon that you capture can then be transferred into the Nintendo DS game. Players can exchange gifts by wirelessly connecting their Pokéwalkers as well.

Once your Pokémon returns from its stroll, an illustrated journal shows the adventures that it enjoyed during its trip. The Pokémon may even gain a level when its walk ends, making the Pokéwalker an invaluable tool.

THE GOLD (AND SILVER) STANDARD

With its classic roots and multiple new features to experience, Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions are adventures that should appeal to all Pokémon fans, whether they have only recently discovered the series or have been there from the beginning. And if you haven't experienced a Pokémon game before, these two titles offer a great opportunity to hop on board.





019 SENTRET
Scout Pokémon

HT 2'07"
WT 13.2 lbs.

A very cautious Pokémon, it raises itself up using its tail to get a better view of its surroundings.

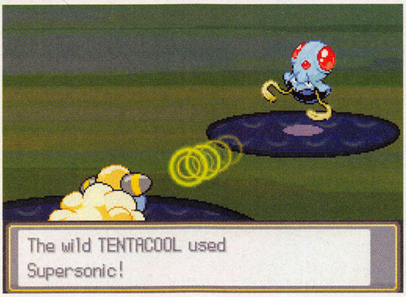
SENTRET

[Right] All that valuable data in the Pokédex, and we just want to look at the cute pics.

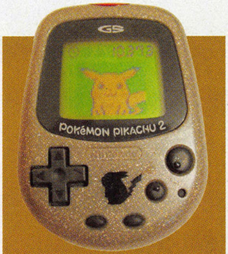
10:34 TUES

Johto

Violet City
This old village is still surrounded by trees and other scenery.

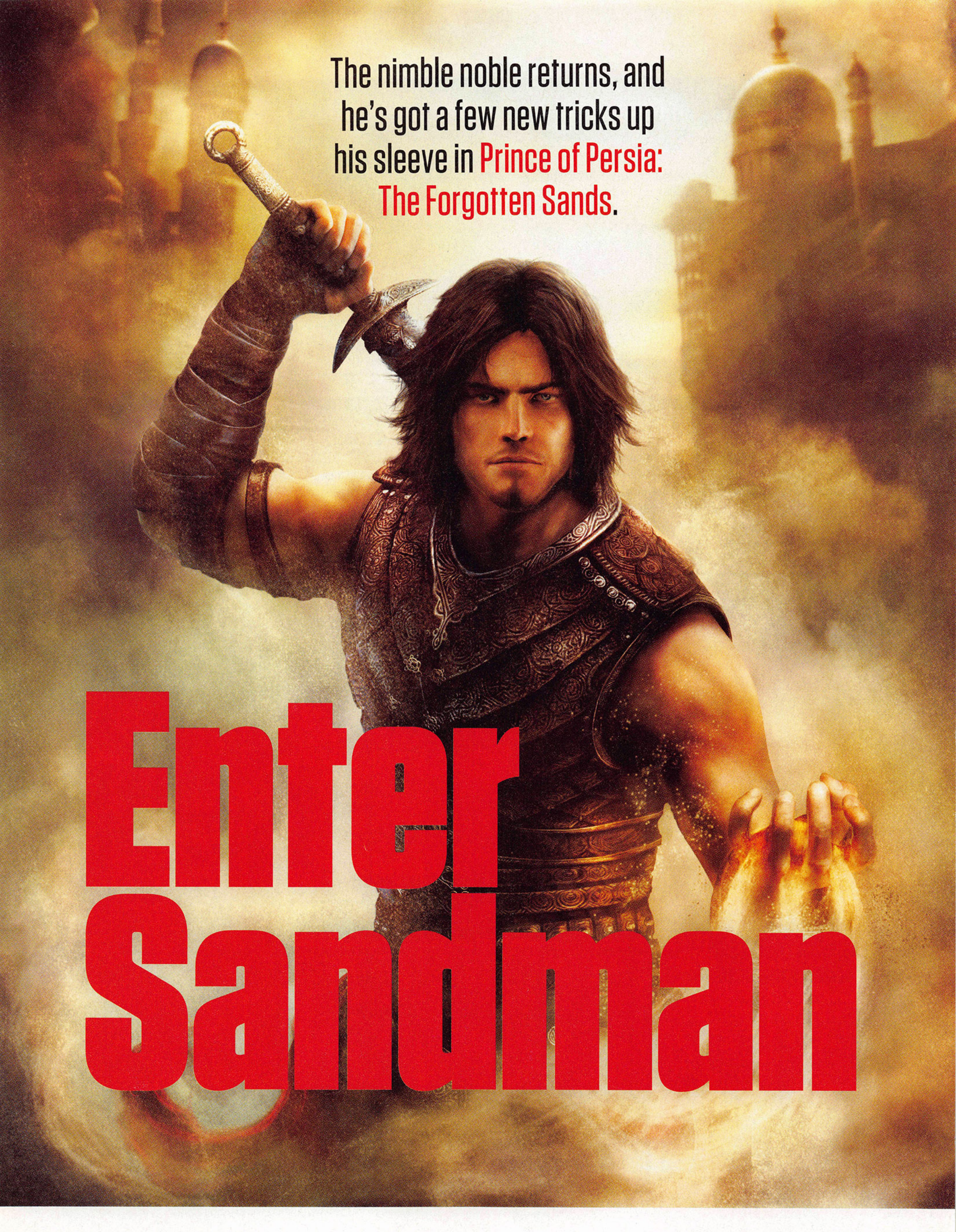


The wild TENTACOOL used Supersonic!



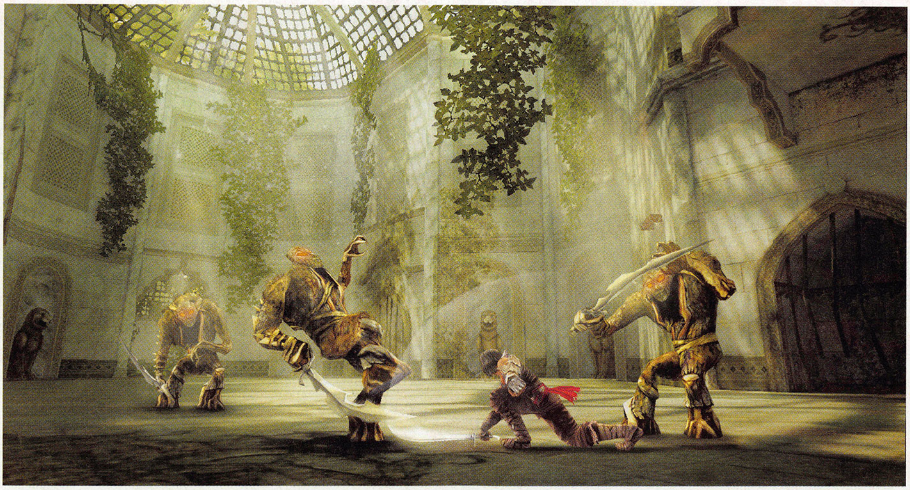
Pocket Pikachu

The Pokéwalker is a fantastic accessory, but did you know that it's actually similar to a device that was released to coincide with Pokémon Gold and Silver Versions back in 2000? The Pokémon Pikachu 2 GS was a virtual pet that allowed you to care for your very own Pikachu. Although the device measured your steps and allowed you to earn Watts to transfer into the Game Boy Pokémon games, it did not support nearly as many features as the Pokéwalker. Even so, it was a snazzy toy to play with during a time when virtual pets were all the rage.



The nimble noble returns, and he's got a few new tricks up his sleeve in Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands.

Enter Sandman



It seems a prince's work is never done. We thought the critically acclaimed Sands of Time saga concluded with 2005's Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones, but our royal swashbuckler will return to action this May with Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands. Fans needn't worry about this addendum messing with the trilogy's satisfying conclusion, however. Instead, it takes place in the seven-year gap between the original Sands of Time game and Warrior Within. Story specifics remain largely under wraps, but we know the tale revolves around a previously unvisited kingdom that's been enslaved by a mysterious evil. A female djinn beseeches the prince to come to the rescue, and since this is before our hero got all angsty, he agrees.

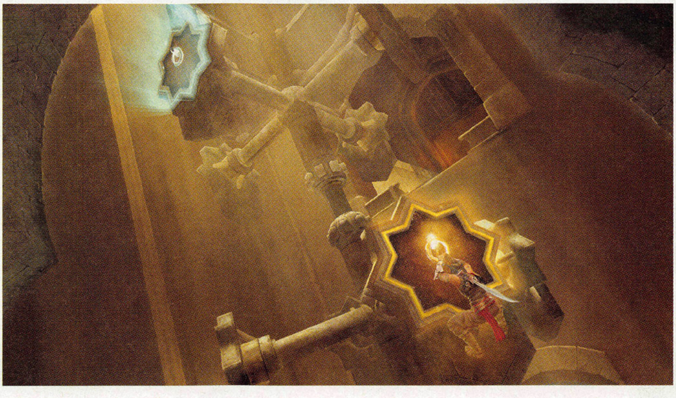
Nearly every other major platform (including the Nintendo DS handheld) is getting its own version of The Forgotten Sands, with each set at some point during the aforementioned seven-year gap. Aside from that, they'll have little in common with the Wii game. "We received a mandate from [Ubisoft headquarters in] Paris two years ago to create a unique Prince of Persia experience for the Wii console," says lead game designer Yanick Piche. "So this is not a port. It's not an adaptation. It's built from the ground up specifically for Wii."

The game's development team is based out of Ubisoft's Quebec City studio and combines PoP vets with series newcomers. Their goal, according to Piche, is "building on the gameplay pillars of the Sands of Time trilogy—platforming, cunning traps, acrobatics, environmental puzzles—to give an authentic Prince of Persia experience. Then on top of that, we've mixed in new powers to create something that feels fresh and original." The source of those powers is a magical phial discovered by the prince, and they enable him to manipulate sand, which, as you might imagine, comes in quite handy in the desert. But more on that in a moment.

POETRY IN MOTION

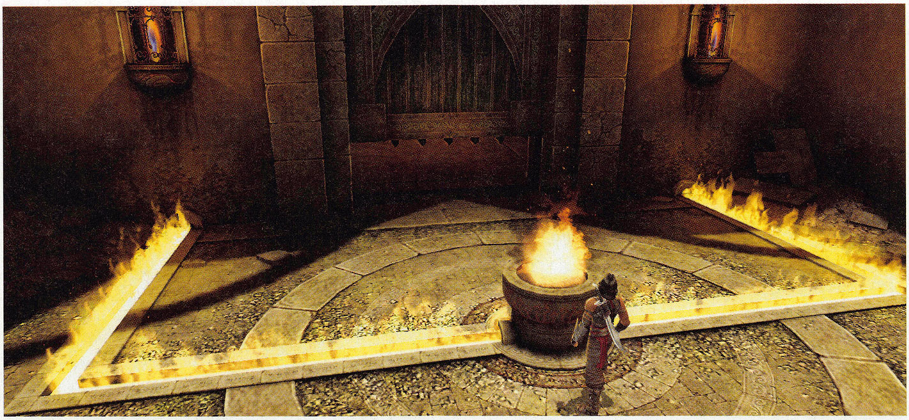
The game's opening sequence kicks off our demo with a bang. While the prince is visiting a palatial estate, one seriously potent sandstorm hits and starts to bring the massive structure crashing down around him. Because his highness has yet to acquire the phial and the new abilities that come with it, you have to rely solely on his legendary acrobatics to navigate crumbling platforms, falling pillars, and other such hazards. Fortunately, our hero hasn't lost a step—whether climbing ledges, running along walls, or making death-defying leaps, he moves with extraordinary grace and agility.

A big reason for that is the game running at a constant 60 frames per second. "This is very important for Prince of Persia," insists Piche. "The prince is known for his speed and acrobatic movements, and for gameplay, it's crucial to have that responsiveness. Plus, it's a staple of the franchise. So on this point, there was no compromising." As you



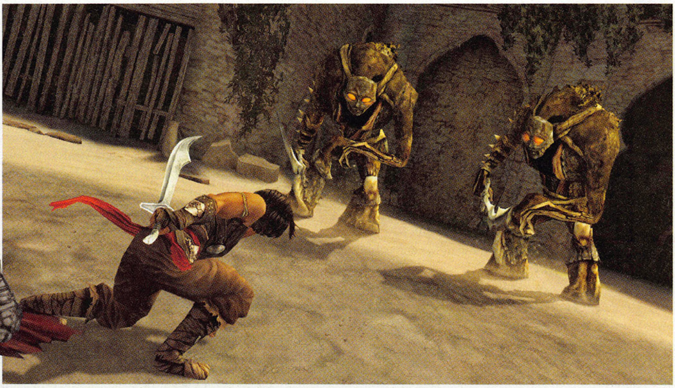
BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **UBISFOT** DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT QUEBEC CITY** RELEASE: **MAY 2010** Wii



can see from these screens, that fluidity certainly doesn't come at the expense of the game's visuals. Given sufficient time and the benefit of developing specifically for Wii, Piche says the team was able to "optimize everything and really push the console as far as it could go."

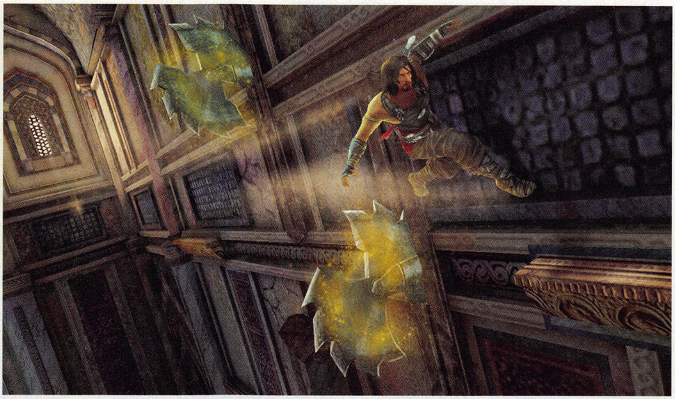
After the prince makes good his escape, Piche jumps ahead to a bit later in the game and a classic PoP-style catacomb, complete with such vintage traps as wall-mounted buzzsaws and rotating blade columns. There we're introduced to the first of our hero's new abilities—the Sand Ring. All of the phial-endowed powers are pointer-driven and context-sensitive, making them very easy to use. The core function of the Sand Ring allows you to create a handhold on any wall by simply pointing at the desired location with the Wii Remote controller and pressing the B Button. Its most obvious purpose is to let you ascend areas where there are no ledges available. However, you can generate only one



Reprising his role from The Sands of Time, Yuri Lowenthal will provide the voice of the prince.

at a time, and as we found out later in the demo, things get considerably more complex when you have to use multiple sand powers in concert.

Beyond the catacombs, we encounter our first environmental puzzle, which involves scaling a massive tower and activating pressure plates along the way to unlock a door. The added wrinkle: you have to use the Sand Ring to activate special power crystals that let you rotate individual sections of the tower. When confronted with such challenges, you can press the – Button to get a zoomed-out overview of the area, which is useful for plotting your course or regaining your bearings. The game also plays with the camera by briefly switching to a cinematic view during particularly spectacular leaps or other highlight-worthy moments. In the hands of a skilled player, the action almost looks choreographed; it has the same fluidity that made previous PoP titles so gratifying and left you feeling like a badass.

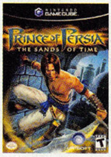


For those who aren't yet experts, The Forgotten Sands offers a few subtle aids to help you learn the ropes. During platforming segments, for instance, a faint blue line illustrates the prince's reach, letting you know whether he'll be able to make a jump. It eliminates the guesswork of judging distances in 3-D space and cuts down on the flow-killing need to tinker with the camera. Lest you be concerned that this feature might make the game too easy, keep in mind that you can no longer erase your mistakes simply by rewinding time as you could in previous titles. As Piche puts it, the blue line is a way to "increase the accessibility of the

A Brief History of Time

The Forgotten Sands is an interquel that takes place between the first game in the Sands of Time saga, and its sequel, Warrior Within. If you've yet to get acquainted with the prince, the following synopses will help bring you up to speed, but everyone really should experience this spectacular trilogy for themselves. Warning: spoilers ahead.

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time — 2003



Deceived by the traitorous Vizier, the prince unleashes the Sands of Time, and with them a curse that transforms every living thing in his kingdom into a monster. The only inhabitants to escape that fate are the Vizier, the prince, and Farah (the daughter of an Indian maharajah recently conquered by the prince and his father). Despite their differences, the prince and Farah team up to stop the Vizier's evil machinations and undo the curse. The two fall in love along the way, but Farah falls to her death during battle. Using the Dagger of Time, the prince ends up going back to before he and his father even invaded Farah's kingdom. In doing so, he brings Farah back to life, though she has no recollection of the game's events or their time together. The prince steals a kiss before reversing time to make her forget that, too. He then departs, leaving the dagger with Farah.

Prince of Persia: Warrior Within — 2004

GAMECUBE
Prince of Persia
Warrior Within

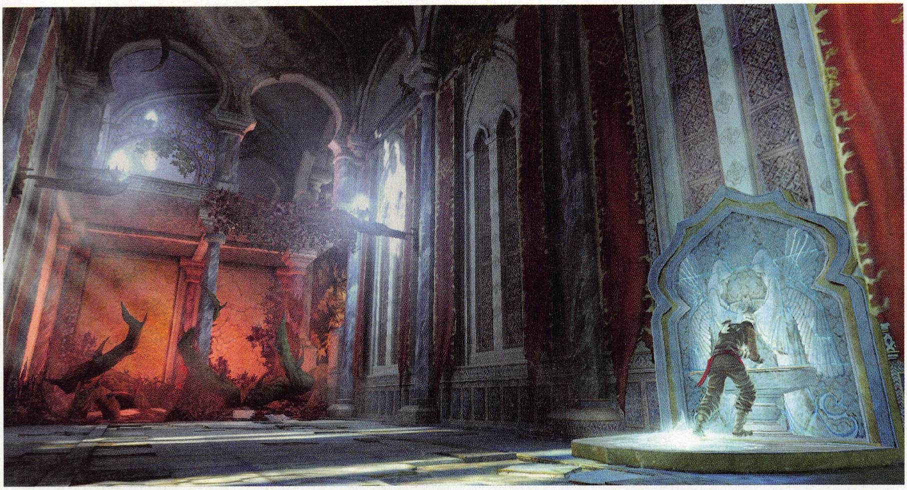
Set seven years after its predecessor, Warrior Within finds the prince a bit worse for wear. It seems his actions created a rift in the timeline, spawning the Dahaka, an invincible creature that hunts our hero day and night to set fate back on its proper course. The prince journeys to the island birthplace of the Sands of Time, hoping to find a way to travel into the past and stop the Sands from ever being created. There he rescues a woman named Kaileena, who he later learns is the Empress of Time. Believing her to be the cause of his troubles, the prince kills Kaileena, only to discover that her death is actually what creates the Sands of Time. From there, things get exceptionally complicated, but the prince eventually saves Kaileena, and the two join forces to defeat the Dahaka before setting sail for Babylon together. The game ends when our new couple finds the city burning.

What we want to know: will the Dahaka make an appearance in The Forgotten Sands?

Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones — 2005

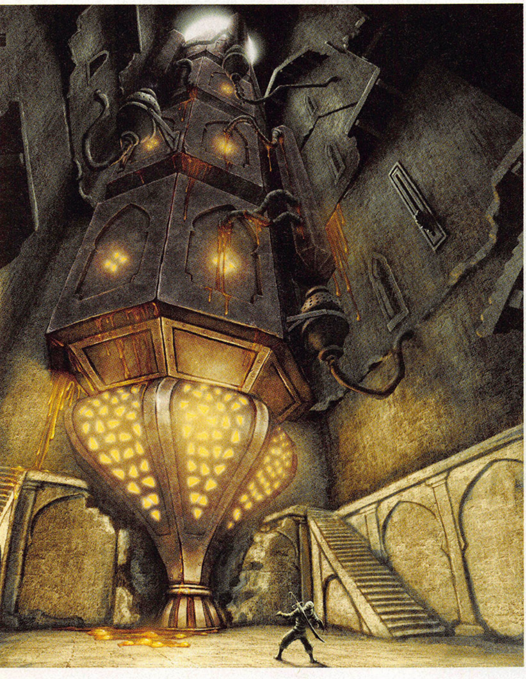
GAMECUBE
Prince of Persia
The Two Thrones

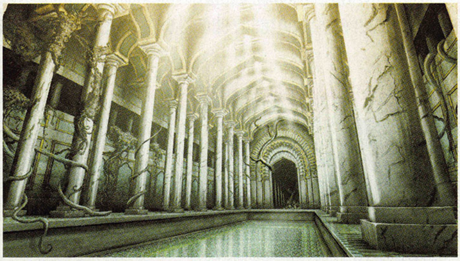
Picking up where Warrior Within left off, we learn that the person responsible for setting Babylon ablaze is none other than the Vizier. The prince realizes that when he took Kaileena from the island, the Sands of Time were never created, which means the events of the first game never happened, thus bringing the Vizier back to life. The villain captures and kills Kaileena, however, creating the Sands anew and using them to make himself immortal. The Sands also begin to corrupt the prince, trying to consume our hero's body and mind. In the course of the adventure, the prince encounters Farah, who does not remember him. Eventually, the prince confronts the Vizier and kills him with the Dagger of Time. After an internal struggle to purge himself of the Sands' corruption, the prince awakens in Farah's arms and begins to tell her of his adventures.



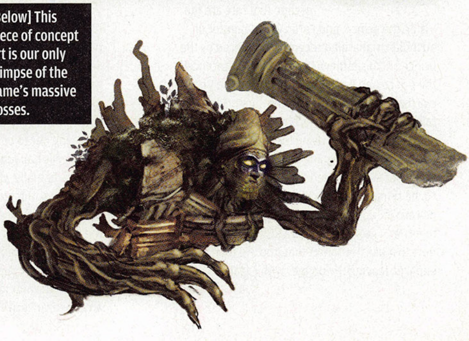
game and make it less frustrating" without watering down level design. In that same vein, if you get lost or lose your bearings, you can bring up a reminder that points you to your short-term objective.

You can also call upon a friend for help, thanks to a new co-op mode. "Wii is a social platform, so the co-op is something we really wanted to include," Piche tells us. "It's akin to what can be found in Super Mario Galaxy. The second player can jump in and out at any time, and he's there to lend assistance to the first player. He can manipulate traps and hinder enemies, he can draw a path on the screen to illustrate routes or secret areas, and he can take charge of the sand powers via his pointer." That may not set the hearts of hardcore gamers ablaze, but it's a nice way

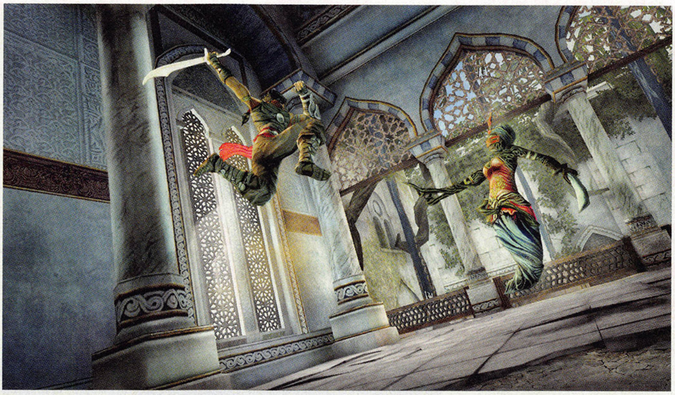




[Below] This piece of concept art is our only glimpse of the game's massive bosses.



to assuage a family member or significant other when you want to hog the TV to play Prince of Persia.

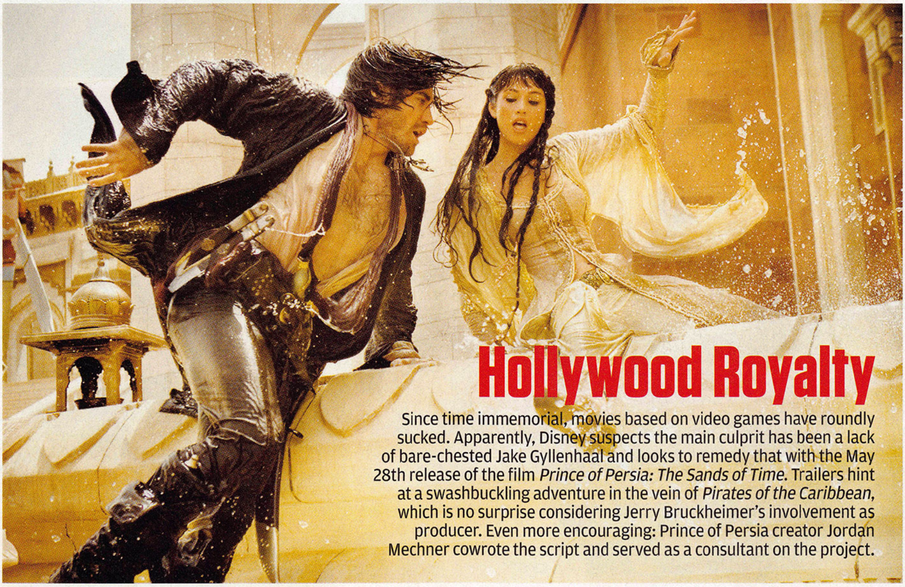


BATTLE ROYAL

A bit further into the demo, we come to our first skirmish with a horde of rather unpleasant-looking monsters. Whereas all aspects of platforming are limited to button and pointer controls for the sake of precision, combat includes gestures to give it a visceral oomph. At the same time, the developers don't want to muck up the works by going too far with motion controls. Therefore, you simply flick the Wii Remote to swing the prince's sword, and flick the Nunchuk controller to have him throw a punch. The rest of his repertoire—blocking, rolling, etc.—employs buttons.

Motion controls or no, the basic swordplay doesn't feel drastically different from that of previous installments, and it's certainly not about to steal the limelight from the acrobatics. The developers have tried to inject it with a bit of additional depth, however. From time to time, a blue aura will surround one of your adversaries, for example, highlighting him as the leader of the group. "This adds an extra element of strategy," offers Piche. "If you go right after the leader and defeat him, all of the remaining enemies will flee, ending the skirmish immediately." The downside of that approach is that you'll miss out on the experience points you would have earned from slaying your foes individually. Gaining experience not only boosts your attack strength; it unlocks new skills, such as a powerful tornado attack or the ability to launch from one enemy's shoulders to attack another. When a sword and athleticism aren't enough, you can also utilize your sand powers during battle; targeting an opponent with the Sand Ring, for instance, will render him immobile for a brief time.

To further keep combat fresh, the developers are emphasizing enemy variety. Familiar creatures are joined by a number of new adversaries, some of which are pretty imposing. We caught a brief glimpse of a hulking Minotaur champion, whose shield and heavy armor made futile any attempt at a direct assault. What has us especially intrigued, however, is the promise of epic-scale boss encounters that implement platforming elements à la PlayStation 2 masterpiece Shadow of the Colossus. Sadly, Ubisoft isn't ready to pull back the curtain on these just yet (aside from a piece of concept art), but the idea seems a perfect fit for the series.



Hollywood Royalty

Since time immemorial, movies based on video games have roundly sucked. Apparently, Disney suspects the main culprit has been a lack of bare-chested Jake Gyllenhaal and looks to remedy that with the May 28th release of the film *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*. Trailers hint at a swashbuckling adventure in the vein of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, which is no surprise considering Jerry Bruckheimer's involvement as producer. Even more encouraging: Prince of Persia creator Jordan Mechner cowrote the script and served as a consultant on the project.

As it introduces these new concepts, The Forgotten Sands also gives a wink to the franchise's distant past with the occasional side-scrolling section. In the example Piche shows us, the prince must traverse a series of dangerously eroding columns while bowmen fire at him from the ruins in the background. You can dispatch your pesky tormentors by targeting their perches with your sand power, causing the structures to collapse underfoot.

POWER TO THE PRINCE

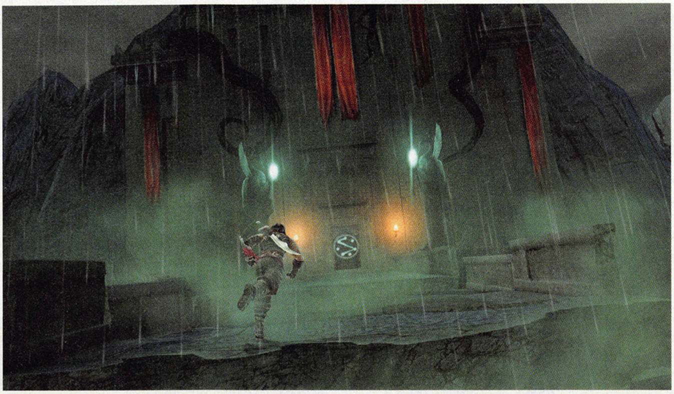
Our demo concludes with an area from the latter half of the game, when the prince is in possession of all three sand powers. Just like the Sand Ring, the Sand Pillar and Sand Sphere are context-sensitive. Aiming your pointer at the ground will activate the Sand Pillar, which is essentially a mini whirlwind that elevates our hero. In combat, you can use it to send your enemies airborne, which is particularly effective against shielded foes (who are immune to the Sand Ring). To conjure the Sand Sphere, you target the prince himself. Doing so allows him to float temporarily, and you can pull it of midjump to help you cross especially wide gaps. The Sand Sphere also serves as a magical barrier during battle, stunning enemies if they attack you.

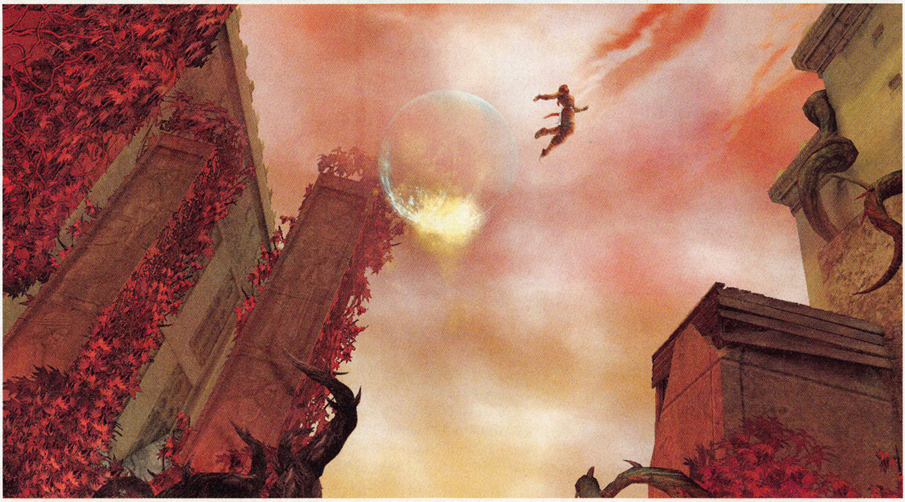
The beauty of the sand powers comes into focus when they're mixed in with the prince's usual acrobatics. Oftentimes, the environment won't offer sufficient means to progress through a particular platforming challenge, so you'll have to figure out when and where to call upon your supernatural abilities. It adds to the puzzle facet of the game, introducing an extra layer of critical thinking and creativity. "It's up to the player to decide how he wants to tackle a particular challenge," stresses Piche. "There's rarely just one 'right' way to succeed." In that same spirit, there are alternative paths hidden throughout the game, and discovering them will usually lead to treasure (i.e., experience points) or allow you to complete special challenges (which Piche compares to achievements on Xbox 360).

Perhaps most important is that stringing together the sand powers makes the prince look cooler than ever. During one of our favorite sequences, he needs to reach a high ledge where an enemy is standing guard. There's nothing in the surroundings to help him make the climb, so he uses a Sand Ring on the adjacent wall, performs a backflip off of it, triggers the Sand Sphere in midair, then paralyzes the guard with a blast from the Sand Ring before leaping onto the ledge and dispatching the enemy before the poor lug even knows what hit him. It's awesome.

Adding to a beloved saga is always risky business (just ask George Lucas), but the developers of The Forgotten Sands are confident they've struck the right balance—staying true to what made the previous games so special while coming up with enough exciting new stuff to justify this addendum. Having seen it in action, we're optimistic the prince's newest adventure will live up to its royal pedigree.

[Right] The crash of thunder during this torrential downpour highlights the game's impressive sound effects.





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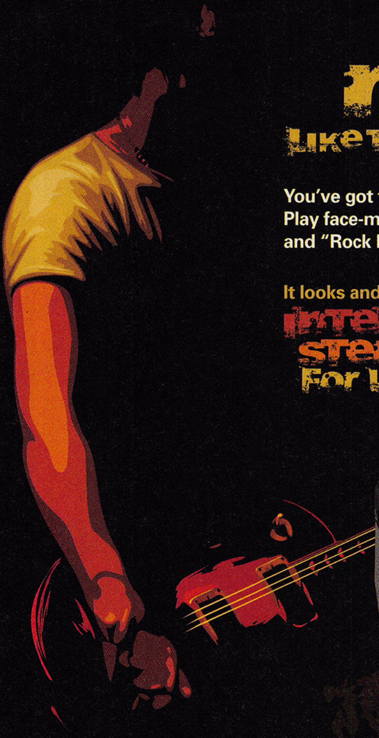

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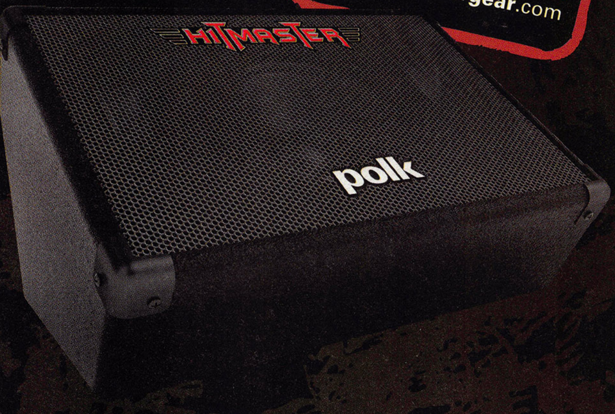

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THE CREATORS OF THE CONDUIT CUT LOOSE WITH WII-EXCLUSIVE FIGHTING GAME **TOURNAMENT OF LEGENDS**.

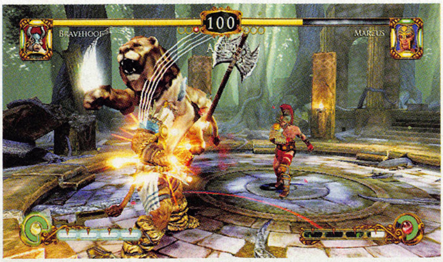
CLASH of the TITANS

There are certainly a lot of games on the Wii console, but the system doesn't always have the kind of titles players crave. Take 3-D weapons-based fighters, for instance, such as the popular Soulcalibur series. Sure, Wii got a Soulcalibur game—2007's Soulcalibur Legends—but that was an action-adventure title, not a fighting game. Thankfully High Voltage Software (the developer of first-person shooter The Conduit) saw an opening in the market and decided to step in with Tournament of Legends.

As it turns out, however, Tournament of Legends didn't come out of the blue. At 2009's E3 Expo, High Voltage showcased two new games it was developing: first-person shooter The Grinder and one-on-one fighter Gladiator A.D. Since that time, Gladiator A.D. has undergone a significant transformation. The weapons- and magic-based fighting game—now being published by Sega (The Grinder still remains publisherless at the time of this writing)—has a roster of mythological gods and monsters instead of the originally planned blood-drenched gladiators.

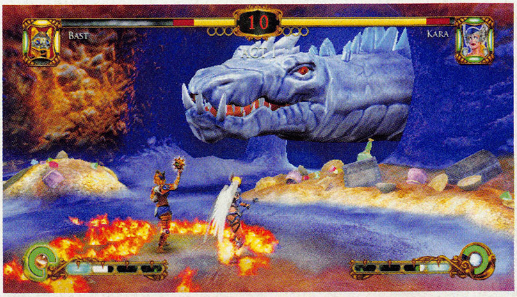
This change allows for a more epic adventure in which pretty much anything is possible. The basic premise of the game is that the Roman god Jupiter has disappeared, leaving a power vacuum—a vacuum that the god of death, Thanatos, fills. The arrogant god issues a challenge that whoever defeats him in one-on-one combat will assume his power.

A gladiator, a Minotaur, a Valkyrie, a Medusa, a bronze robot (think the robotic owl Bubo from the 1981 film *Clash of the Titans*, only man-shaped), and four other mythological warriors take him up on his offer.



Fortunately, the controls for these confrontations are easy to master. All weapon strikes are motion-controlled: you use the Wii Remote controller for primary-weapon attacks, and the Nunchuk controller for secondary-weapon ones; holding B while swinging either results in a more powerful strike. You hold B and move the Control Stick to dodge. The Control Stick is also used for using long-range magic attacks; hold A and move the stick up, down, left, or right to unleash a powerful maneuver. (You can also throw weapons by tapping C.) Each weapon has its own unique magic attack, adding to the strategy—especially since you can unlock the ability to swap weapons between characters of the same class (Kara the Valkyrie can use Narcia the Medusa's two swords, for example). Additionally, characters can use other combatants' weapon enchantments, granting you the ability to do things such as steal some of your opponent's health, slow his movement, or poison him.

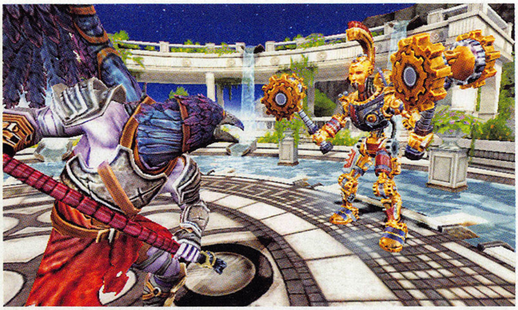
High Voltage didn't stop there, though; the developers also included numerous motion-controlled



Gladiator A.D. wasn't nearly as zany as this Teen-rated game.

BY JUSTIN CHENG

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE** RELEASE: **JUNE 2010** **Wii**



[Right] As with all armor, Thanatos's bird mask can be destroyed.

minigames throughout Tournament of Legends. Between rounds, for instance, you and your adversary can play a minigame to replenish some health or repair your armor (your head and body are protected by armor initially, but it can be damaged or destroyed as the battle rages on). You can defeat your opponent in the first round if you're quick enough; your victory is determined by the number of times you defeat your opponent (as with everything in Tournament of Legends, this is customizable), and you're not just given the victory if the timer expires.

You have to stay on your guard for motion-controlled quick-time events throughout the conflict, too. Each of the game's eight arena-like levels features a guardian creature that can strike at any moment. When fighting in the ruins of a Roman coliseum, for example, you might be attacked suddenly by a kraken. These random events definitely keep you on your toes. (Interestingly, despite being so motion-control-centric, the game also features support for the Classic Controller.)

There is a lot to see and do in Tournament of Legends, and although we got an extensive play test with the title, we wanted to learn even more. We chatted with High Voltage Software's chief creative officer Eric Nofsinger and Tournament of Legends designer Pat Dolan to get the inside scoop.

NINTENDO POWER Tournament of Legends looks very different from the Gladiator A.D. we saw at E3. What was the reason for this change?

PAT DOLAN While we're quite proud of the world and look that we created, as development went on, we realized that we wanted to ramp things up and go more "over-the-top" in ways that didn't fit as well with that direction.

ERIC NOFSINGER The game we took to E3 could really be considered more of a prototype of Tournament of Legends. Through the natural progression of game design, the iterative process brought us to a more Wii-centric title. We realized that what we really wanted to accomplish was a larger-than-life look and feel with fantastic creatures and environments. Doing so really opened up a whole new world of ideas; everything from Greek mythology and then on to world mythology. And then the idea just took off.

Why you did decide to go with mythological settings and characters?

NOFSINGER World mythology benefits from a rich palette to draw from for archetypal characters, heroic story, and sheer variety. It gave us an incredible opportunity to create immediately understood and powerful characters. The fighters are true to their source, but we've certainly put our own spin on them. In many ways it feels like we are creating a new comic-book universe.

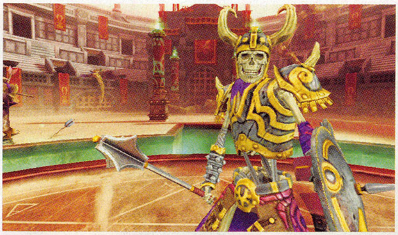
DOLAN It provided a perfect fit for the sort of epic moves, special effects,

KARA, THE VALKYRIE

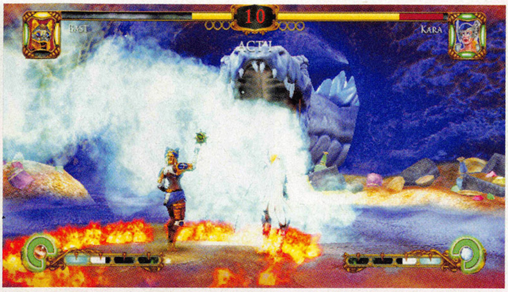
When Kara's not stabbing foes with a tri-section spear, she's calling upon the aid of Norse gods such as Thor.

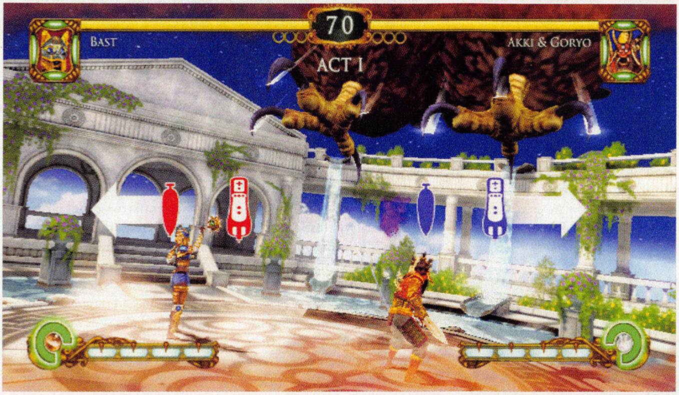
BRAVEHOOF, THE MINOTAUR

In order to protect the natural world, Bravehoof will smash his enemies with his head or his massive battleaxe.



[Below] Each level features a giant creature that can strike at any moment. Follow the onscreen gestures to escape unscathed.





and characters that we wanted to incorporate into the game, as well as giving us a setting that our audience can immediately relate to and get excited about.

NOFSINGER Honestly, I think we have tapped into something really special. Serendipitously, the American zeitgeist seems to be very much aligned with our vision for Tournament of Legends. The breadth of fantasy movies based on myth coming out is especially exciting. 2010 seems to be the year that ancient myths will be brought back into pop culture!

Obviously, Tournament of Legends is a very different game from The Conduit. Why did you decide to make a weapons-based fighting game after making a first-person shooter? Did you draw inspiration from any other fighting games?

DOLAN Well, we wanted something that would really capitalize on Wii's motion control, and a weapon-based fighter seemed to be an ideal fit. As we soon discovered, this meant that there weren't really any other games on the system to pull ideas from. At first, this seemed daunting, but we quickly realized that it gave us a chance to create a much more accessible and different type of fighting game, so all in all, it worked out well....

NOFSINGER When we were coming up with the basic ground rules for Tournament of Legends, we looked at Bushido Blade [for PlayStation] for inspiration in our weapon-switching system. For our more accessible control structure, we drew inspiration from Smash Bros. They have an elegant system for pulling off special moves and we didn't want to overcomplicate that experience for the player. In addition, we dissected the few popular melee-weapons-based games on Wii, like Wii Sports Resort Swordplay and [Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels]. We saw an opportunity to bring a bigger and better experience to these players—huge, epic moments and unbridled fun for a broad range of gamers. Moreover, the designers

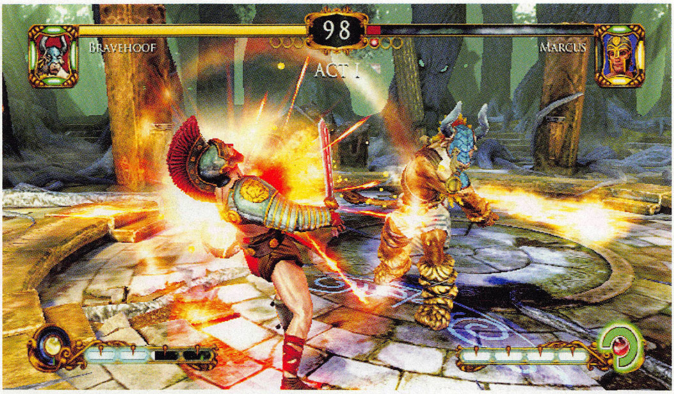
MARCUS, THE GLADIATOR

A sword, a shield, a bear trap, a complement of off-screen archers, and a lion are all part of this Roman gladiator's arsenal.

AKKI & GORYO, THE DEMONS

Since the ghostly Goryo can't interact with the physical world, he commands his claw-and-sword-wielding slave Akki to fight for him.

on the team are fighting-game fanatics, so there are definitely hints of a multitude of other fighting games in our system.



Why did you make Tournament of Legends for the Wii console? What, if any, advantage does Wii have over other platforms with regards to fighting games?

NOFSINGER As with The Conduit, we saw a gap in the vast library of Wii titles. The fighter genre needed a shot in the arm, so we thought, "Why not Wii?" We worked diligently on coming up with an intellectual property that is both interesting to look at and play, as well as unique for Wii. The biggest advantage Wii owners have over other platforms is pretty obvious! The Wii Remote brings a level of immersion to this game that couldn't be done on other systems. Players can get a real sense of two-handed weapon combat. Swinging the Wii Remote attacks with the right-handed weapon, and swinging the Nunchuk attacks with the left weapon—simple. We worked extremely hard to ensure new players can pick up the two controllers and be in the action within seconds.

DOLAN We are huge fans of Wii and believe it has a lot more power than people give it credit for. This was a chance for us to really play to the system's strengths in terms of its motion-control system, as well as the graphic potential that it has hidden under the hood.

The game looks fantastic. Can you tell us a little bit about the technology behind the game?

NOFSINGER Thank you! Like The Conduit, Tournament of Legends uses our proprietary Quantum 3 engine. The team of artists behind our characters, lairs, and guardians used all the modern modeling techniques.... All our characters were modeled in high-poly with ZBrush [and] were then used as normal maps. This also allowed us to have specular maps applied to the characters as well. And that really makes our unique characters pop and differentiates us from other Wii fighting games.

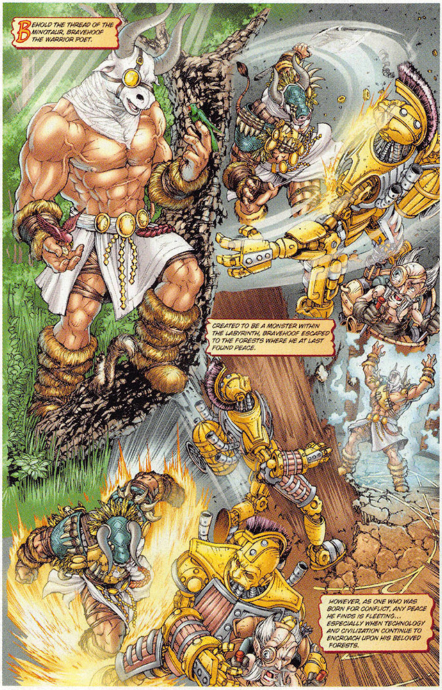
DOLAN One particular thing we are proud of is that our phenomenal environment artists were able to replicate a glacial ice cave with refractive materials, allowing the light that is seen through the ice to bounce and shimmer just like real ice.

NOFSINGER Our artists worked very closely with our brilliant Quantum 3 engineers to achieve the stunning look for all our environments and characters. And since The Conduit we've learned a bit more about what technical limits we can push on Wii, allowing us to let our imaginations really run wild.

What was the reason for including guardian creatures for each stage? How did you decide what kind of creatures each stage would have?

DOLAN Mythology is full of giant monsters that are, in essence, forces of nature. Our hazards were designed to tap into that concept, presenting the players with an unpredictable danger that may, or may not, interrupt their fight at a moment's notice. This allowed us to have some visually impressive "showstopper" moments [and] alter the pacing of the fight in an entertaining way, while further enhancing the epic mythological feel that we were going for.

NOFSINGER When we were designing Tournament of Legends, the phrase "bombastic" was batted around the office quite a bit. What is more bombastic than a giant bird swooping in trying to grab at one of your characters? We had all of this great environmental concept art and we just imagined what would be the perfect "resident" for each "home." It was truly exciting to see our environments come alive when we added the guardians to them—it gave each lair its own unique personality. Plus


BEHOLD THE THREAD OF THE MINOTAUR, BRAVEHOOF THE WARRIOR POET.
CREATED TO BE A MONSTER WITHIN THE LABYRINTH, BRAVEHOOF ESCAPED TO THE FORESTS WHERE HE AT LAST FOUND PEACE.
HOWEVER, AS ONE WHO WAS BORN FOR CONFLICT, ANY PEACE HE FINDS IS FLEETING... ESPECIALLY WHEN TECHNOLOGY AND CIVILIZATION CONTINUE TO ENCROACH UPON HIS BELOVED FORESTS.

COMIC RELIEF

The characters in Tournament of Legends are basically exaggerated superhero/villain-ish versions of ancient mythological beings. It's only fitting, then, that each combatant's story be told in a comic-book style.

we're big Ray Harryhausen fans. His movies always had these fantastic mythological creatures.

DOLAN Besides, it gave us a fun way to create more variety in the fights with Wii Remote/Nunchuk challenges....

The characters all have distinct looks and personalities, with anachronistic behavior/dialogue. Can you talk a little bit about how you developed the characters?

NOFSINGER Creating the ideal cast of characters was positively one of the most enjoyable and heated aspects of Tournament of Legends development. There were some extraordinarily passionate debates on the type of personality each character should have—which actually ensured they each had their own compelling background story and well-thought-out defining personalities.

DOLAN Our goal was to pull characters from as many backgrounds, myths, and legends as possible, while ensuring that each one of them was as appealing as possible. We created an initial list of, essentially, archetypes, and then set our concept artists and designers loose to come up with cool ideas for them. From that point, it was just a question of figuring out what aspects of those characters made them interesting thematically, as well as mechanically. This allowed us to change the design and moves of each character in order to create the most compelling combinations that we could.

NOFSINGER From a character-design perspective, we paid a lot of attention to how their silhouettes look. If you look at the Street Fighter series, for example, M. Bison has a remarkably distinct silhouette when compared to Blanka. We wanted to ensure that when you compare Kara (the Valkyrie) versus a character like Volcanus (the Bronzeman), there is an immediately recognizable differentiation between the two. I believe we got that just right.

Some of the special attacks are pretty over-the-top, such as when the gladiator sics a lion on his opponent. How did you come up with them?

NOFSINGER I'm really glad you think so! A guiding principal for Tournament of Legends was to be "over-the-top" with all aspects of the game. Our mantra was, "what would look cool and be fun at the same time?"

DOLAN We really wanted to build up the epic, legendary feel of the gameplay, and we quickly realized that over-the-top special moves would be the best way to do that. Most of our moves were created by simply brainstorming crazy ideas until we had something that we loved, but were sure that we couldn't pull off.... Nine times out of ten, we managed to pull it off anyway, thanks to our ingenious programmers and resourceful artists.

NOFSINGER From the beginning, there was always discussion of, "will we have a lion in the game?" And lions are cool, to be sure, but what would be better than having a trained lion as a special attack? Since Marcus (the gladiator) was a manipulative character that would essentially do anything to win—an attack lion as a pet made perfect sense. And capturing your opponent in a giant bear trap and throwing a steak at them before unleashing the lion—why, that's first-rate entertainment.

We played the game using the Wii-Remote-and-Nunchuk combo, and the game seems to be very motion-control-heavy. Can you tell us a bit about how the game is played using the Classic controller?

DOLAN That was a challenge.... Most of the core combat is controlled with the buttons, but whenever possible we made sure that the motion-controlled "moments"—like the hazards or controllable special moves—are executed with the control sticks using directional movements as close to the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controls as possible. We think this should satisfy the Classic-controller fans who want button control, while still preserving the feel that we were going for.

NOFSINGER And just like we did in The Conduit, players can remap the controls to their liking.

The Conduit had a lot of online features. Will Tournament of Legends have any online stuff?

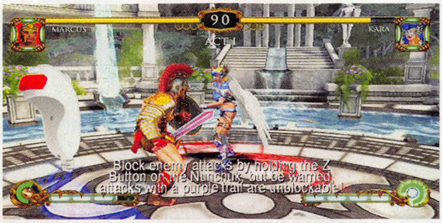
DOLAN The Conduit has a great set of online features and we talked about something similar for Tournament of Legends, but at the end of the day, we felt that, given our development cycle, we needed to focus on making the core game the best it could possibly be.

NOFSINGER And the spirit of that is we wanted to ensure that friends and family would get the "on-the-couch" experience that harkens back to the golden days of arcade fighters— two people dueling it out next to each other—trash-talking and having a blast. This essential decision really allowed us to focus on the core gameplay to ensure tight responsiveness and over-the-top gameplay.

Is there anything else you would like to say to the Nintendo Power readers?

DOLAN Just that we're all very proud of what we've accomplished with Tournament of Legends, and hope that they all enjoy playing it as much as we enjoyed creating it!

NOFSINGER I'd like to just say thanks for supporting High Voltage Software and we look forward to hearing the public's reaction to our next original game!



Block enemy attacks by holding the Z Button on the Nunchuk, but be warned: attacks with a purple trail are unblockable!

[Above] The controls are simple, but there's a tutorial if you need it.

100
JUPITER
ACT I
AKKI & GORYO

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Wii
Punch-Out
RESIDENT EVIL RETURNS TO Wii
DEFENDING the TITLE
AGENTS of CHANGE

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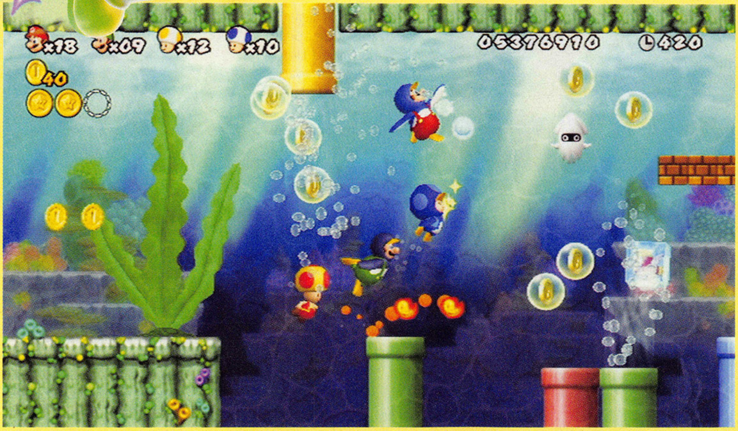
THE 2009

NINTENDO POWER AWARDS!

In a year that saw amazing game innovations and crowd-pleasing retro rebirths, could even Nintendo's top franchises keep up? (Spoiler alert: look to the right.) This time we're presenting the editors' and readers' winners separately, because we've come to realize that they are two very different kinds of awards. While our picks reflect a broader knowledge of all nominees, the popular vote more accurately reflects the lasting impact that these games have. We think it's an important distinction, and we feel that it's only right to give each set of winners its own spotlight. And now, without further ado....

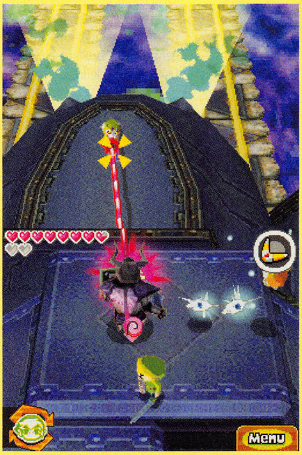
Wii GAME OF THE YEAR

New Super Mario Bros. Wii



With all due respect to the system's other very worthy nominees, this category was no contest. Nothing short of a new Zelda game would have stood much of a chance against the first new 2-D Mario platformer to hit a console in almost two decades. With challenging level designs and maddeningly fun multiplayer, New Super Mario Bros. Wii once again proved that Nintendo's best ideas are timeless.

THE NOMINEES: Klonoa, Little King's Story, MadWorld, New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Punch-Out!!, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10



The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks

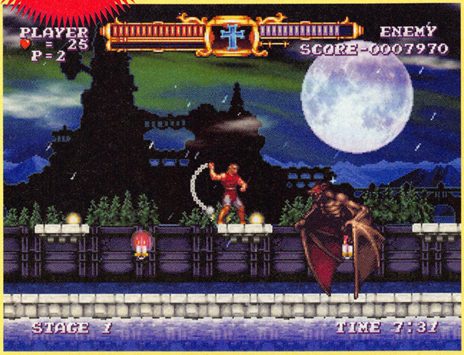
Selecting our top DS game was much tougher than making our pick for Wii, but the somewhat obvious choice won in the end, and deservedly so. Sprit Tracks made significant improvements to an already brilliant formula, with even more new ideas and gameplay variety than usual. We could have done with a bit less train time, but overall, Spirit Tracks is one of Link's all-time best handheld adventures.

THE NOMINEES: Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars, Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days, The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story, Rhythm Heaven, Scribblenauts

NINTENDO DS GAME OF THE YEAR

WiiWARE GAME OF THE YEAR

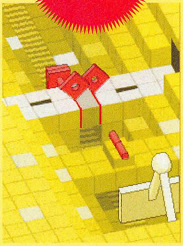
Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth



Cave Story was among the office favorites to win this category, but the game, unfortunately, slipped into 2010, rendering it ineligible. On the plus side, Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth, which we hadn't expected to make the cutoff, released just in time. Like Contra ReBirth, Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth added an excellent new Super NES-style installment to a classic series. To be honest, either ReBirth game could have won, but we've always been partial to whips and flying Medusa heads.

THE NOMINEES: Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth, Contra ReBirth, Final Fantasy IV: The After Years, LostWinds: Winter of the Melodias, NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits, Tales of Monkey Island

BEST MUSIC/ RHYTHM GAME



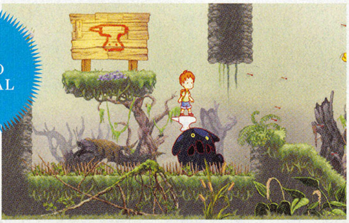
Rhythm Heaven

Pitting plastic-instrument bands against a rhythm-based mini-game collection may be comparing apples to oranges, but as far as we're concerned, oranges tasted better this year. With its infectious original tunes, off-the-wall humor, and fresh, addictive gameplay, Rhythm Heaven stood out among the genre's other brilliant, but very familiar, experiences.

THE NOMINEES: The Beatles: Rock Band (Wii), DJ Hero (Wii), Guitar Hero 5 (Wii), Rhythm Heaven (DS)

A Boy and His Blob

BEST RETRO REVIVAL

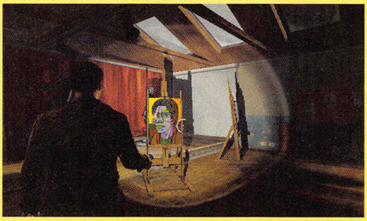


It's been a great year for retro fans—numerous titles have created experiences that look and feel just like ones from days gone by. But A Boy and His Blob takes things a step further: it makes a classic property far better than it was before by emphasizing the brilliant core concepts, improving the game structure, and raising it to the next level with stunning animation and a true sense of emotion.

THE NOMINEES: A Boy and His Blob (Wii), Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth (WW), Contra ReBirth (WW), Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS), Final Fantasy IV: The After Years (WW), Klonoa (Wii)

BEST SOUND/ VOICE ACTING

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories



The audio in Shattered Memories delivers on all fronts. The voice acting is the strongest in series history, ensuring that the compelling narrative delivers its full emotional punch. Likewise, the fantastically creepy sound effects help establish a thoroughly unnerving mood. What truly sets it apart, though, is the best use of the Wii Remote speaker to date. Holding it up to your ear like a cell phone really immerses you in the game's world.

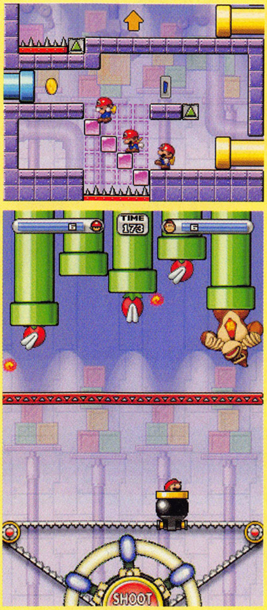
THE NOMINEES: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare–Reflex Edition (Wii), Dead Space Extraction (Wii), Ghostbusters: The Video Game (Wii), The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii), Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS), Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)

BEST PLATFORMER

New Super Mario Bros. Wii

We hate to say it (cover your ears, boy and blob), but this may be our most lopsided victory ever. The other nominees are all outstanding, but unfortunately for them, they were up against the series that practically invented the genre. With a hefty amount of classic Mario goodness and fresh four-player fun, the only thing that might have stood a chance against New Super Mario Bros. Wii was another Mario game.

THE NOMINEES: A Boy and His Blob (Wii), Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS), Klonoa (Wii), LostWinds: Winter of the Melodias (WW), New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii), NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits (WW)

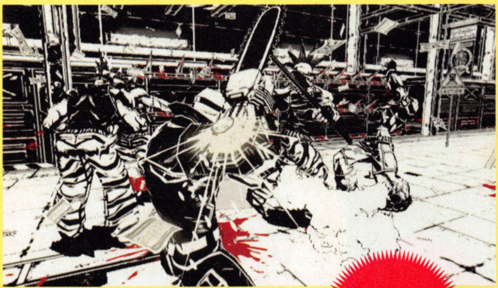


Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again

DSiWARE GAME OF THE YEAR

When the world-famous plumber and the big ape get together, something special is bound to happen. That's certainly true in Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again. It isn't merely a great action-puzzle game with clever level design; refined play mechanics actually make it more satisfying than its retail predecessor. Tons of stages and a custom level creator also make it one of the most robust DSiWare offerings.

THE NOMINEES: Art Style: Precipice, Dragon Quest Wars, Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again, Mighty Flip Champs!, Puzzle League Express



BEST ACTION GAME

MadWorld

The distinct black-and-white visual style definitely separates MadWorld from the rest of 2009's Wii titles, but it's the completely over-the-top, action-packed, and, well, *mad* gameplay that makes this Mature-rated game truly unique. No other title gives you as many options to dispatch enemies as MadWorld; after all, this is the game in which Man Darts is just one of several insane minigames.

THE NOMINEES: Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth (WW), Contra ReBirth (WW), Gradius ReBirth (WW), MadWorld (Wii), Muramasa: The Demon Blade (Wii), Sonic and the Black Knight (Wii)

16
Wilds of Veile
Normal Atk w/ auto target selection

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

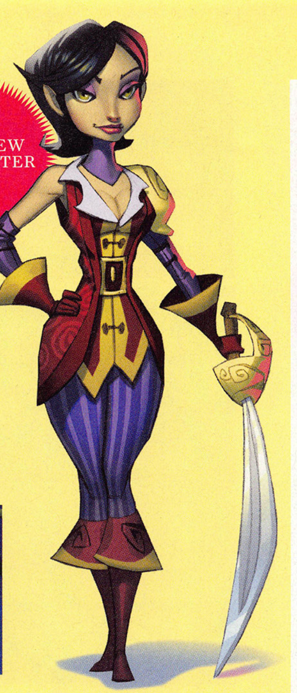
Suikoden: Tierkreis

The Suikoden games have long been known for their fantastic soundtracks, and the series's DS entry continues that tradition. Whether you're preparing to go to war or experiencing a poignant emotional moment, the rich, enchanting tunes perfectly set the stage for the RPG's epic fantasy setting. The number of different tracks is staggering, and the fact that console-quality tunes are coming from a handheld game makes the music all the more impressive.

THE NOMINEES: Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS), The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS), Little King's Story (Wii), Rhythm Heaven (DS), Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS), Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii)

Morgan LeFlay

BEST NEW CHARACTER



The Monkey Island series is chockablock with memorable characters—Guybrush, LeChuck, Elaine, Murray, etc.—and the franchise (and video gamedom in general) got an excellent new addition in 2009: pirate hunter Morgan LeFlay. This unabashed Guybrush fangirl is witty and tough, and she has a compelling character arc across all of the Tales of Monkey Island episodes.

THE NOMINEES: Henry Hatsworth—Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS), Jack—MadWorld (Wii), Lexine—Dead Space Extraction (Wii), Little King—Little King's Story (Wii), Morgan LeFlay—Tales of Monkey Island (WW), Xion—Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)

12
9
3
6
30
30
320

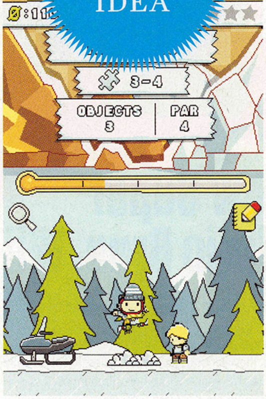
BEST STRATEGY GAME

Little King's Story

Tyranny has never been more charming! Almost everyone who played Little King's Story fell in love with it. The game mixes elements from Pikmin, Animal Crossing, and SimCity to create a unique and addictive concoction. Top it off with inspired art design, a brilliant classical score, and some wonderfully eccentric boss battles, and you've got not only the year's best strategy game, but one of the best reasons to own a Wii.

THE NOMINEES: Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon (DS), Knights in the Nightmare (DS), Little King's Story (Wii), Phantom Brave: We Meet Again (Wii), Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume (DS)

BEST NEW IDEA



"Write anything, solve everything" —Scribblenauts

The concept of Scribblenauts—being able to write anything to cause it to appear in the game—sounds too good to be true, but it really works. Want a jetpack? Done. Want a yeti? Done. Admittedly, there are limits to what you can do with those objects once you've created them, but that didn't stop us from fooling around for hours on end, creating whatever our hearts desired.

THE NOMINEES: Psychological profile—Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii), Puzzle-platforming hybrid—Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS), Puzzle-RPG hybrid—Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes (DS), Telekenisis—Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii), "Write anything, solve everything"—Scribblenauts (DS), Wii MotionPlus—Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

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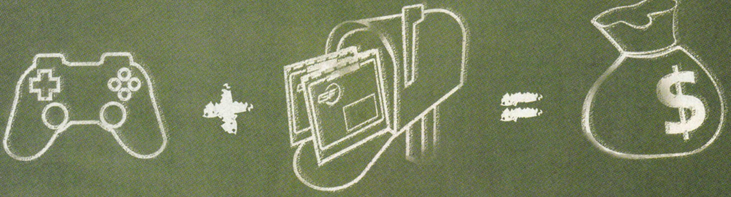

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Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story

In one of the year's closest contests, we gave the nod to Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story. After a somewhat soft second effort, this third installment in the series rebounded in a big way with some of the funniest dialogue ever, plus a satisfyingly long, rich quest. The series's action-infused turn-based battles are better than ever, and broaden the game's appeal beyond the usual hardcore RPG crowd.

THE NOMINEES: Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS), Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS), Phantasy Star Ø (DS), Pokémon Platinum Version (DS), Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor (DS), Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS)

BEST RPG

BEST SPORTS GAME

Stage 2
30 Pts.
Range 15m
Wind
3 mph
Draw bow Z

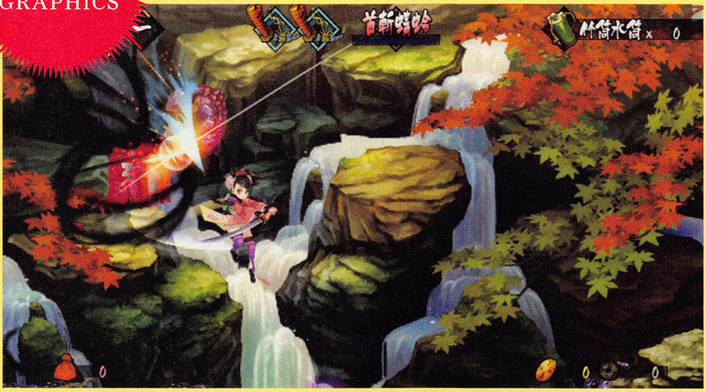
Wii Sports Resort

Despite the golfing perfection in Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 and our lifelong love for Punch-Out!!, Wii Sports Resort was the year's signature sports title for a system that is identified more with lighthearted good times than hyper-realistic athletic simulations. The title packs in a tremendous amount of gameplay variety and next-level Wii MotionPlus-enhanced controls, offers more depth and challenge than its predecessor, and is a blast to play with friends.

THE NOMINEES: Madden NFL 10 (Wii), Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games (DS), NHL 2K10 (Wii), Punch-Out!! (Wii), Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii), Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

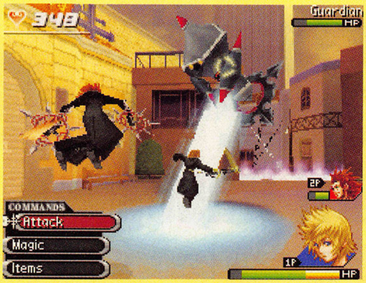
BEST Wii GRAPHICS

Muramasa: The Demon Blade



Meticulously detailed, gorgeously animated, and bursting with color, Muramasa: The Demon Blade fits the bill of a painting come to life. From the rocks to the water to the ferocious boss creatures, nothing was ignored when it comes to this game's stunning graphics. Muramasa is proof positive that video games are art, and that 2-D graphics still have a lot of life left in them.

THE NOMINEES: A Boy and His Blob, Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers, MadWorld, Muramasa: The Demon Blade, Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles, Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

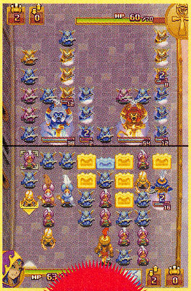


Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days

BEST NINTENDO DS GRAPHICS

Square Enix has a knack for squeezing the most out of hardware, and there are few better examples of that than Kingdom Hearts's DS debut. The game's real-time 3-D environments made our jaws drop the first time we saw them, and some truly massive bosses provide a rare sense of scale for a handheld title. Plus, you just can't beat those lavishly produced cinematics.

THE NOMINEES: Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars, Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days, The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story, Naruto Shippuden Ninja Destiny 2, Phantasy Star 0

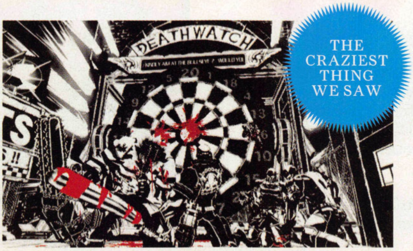


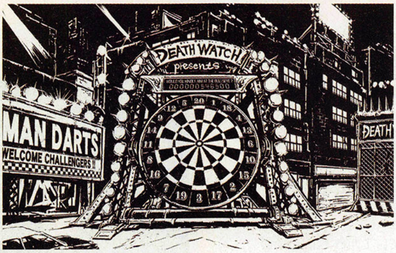
BEST PUZZLE GAME

Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes

It seems that puzzle games are merging with just about every other genre these days, from platforming (Henry Hatsworth) to RPGs (Puzzle Quest), and Clash of Heroes might be the best union yet. Its puzzlish approach to combat makes for the freshest RPG battles we've seen in years, resulting in a hybrid that has the rewarding depth of an epic quest and addictive gameplay that you can't put down.

THE NOMINEES: Art Style: Precipice (DW), Boom Blox Bash Party (Wii), Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes (DS), Peggle: Dual Shot (DS), Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box (DS), Scribblenauts (DS)



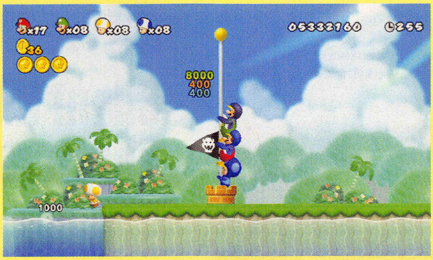


THE CRAZIEST THING WE SAW

Man Darts—MadWorld

A lot of wacky things caught our eye in 2009, but nothing stunned us quite like Man Darts, the ultraviolent side game in MadWorld where—you guessed it—contestants are catapulted into a giant dartboard. It's gleefully gruesome, totally original, and definitely not to be played with kids in the room.

THE NOMINEES: Cutting off your own arm—Dead Space Extraction (Wii), Donkey Kong surprise—Punch-Out!! (Wii), The longest tutorial ever—Knights in the Nightmare (DS), Man Darts—MadWorld (Wii), Nigel and Sebastian—The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii), Super Sandwich—Excitebots: Trick Racing (Wii)

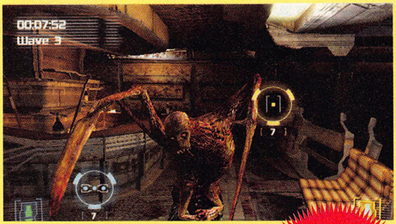


New Super Mario Bros. Wii

BEST MULTI-PLAYER

Like Mario Kart Wii and Super Smash Bros. Brawl before it, New Super Mario Bros. Wii showed us that, even in an era in which more and more people play games online, sharing the same couch is still a blast. Whether you're working together or against each other, multiplayer makes the classic Mario formula even better—something we hadn't thought was possible.

THE NOMINEES: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare—Reflex Edition (Wii), The Conduit (Wii), Guitar Hero 5 (Wii), New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii), Phantasy Star 0 (DS), Wii Sports Resort (Wii)



Dead Space Extraction

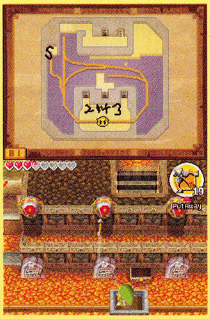
BEST SHOOTER

Dead Space Extraction hasn't lit up the sales charts since its release—and that's a shame because this title is one of the most entertaining shooters to hit the Wii console. Not only is it highly entertaining (particularly when playing cooperatively with a friend), but it also has a solid sci-fi/horror story told in an engaging way with some well-developed characters.

THE NOMINEES: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare—Reflex Edition (Wii), The Conduit (Wii), Dead Space Extraction (Wii), The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii), Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles (Wii)

The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks

BEST ADVENTURE GAME



Like most Zelda games, Spirit Tracks has a fantastic mix of challenging puzzles and great action, with plenty of variety and a fun spirit of adventure. Other nominees featured more compelling stories, but Link's quest to return Zelda's sprit to her body kept us hooked, and we particularly enjoyed getting to know the princess a bit better as a playable character.

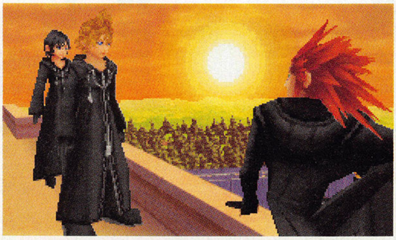
THE NOMINEES: Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii), Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS), Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS), The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS), Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii), Tales of Monkey Island (WW)

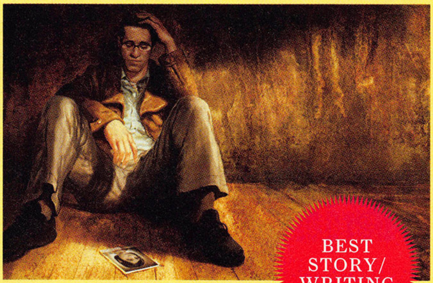
THE FINISH STRONG AWARD

Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days

This was one of our most hotly debated categories, with Kingdom Hearts edging out A Boy and His Blob only after one editor was tossed through a window. The winner's epic conclusion is a two-hour roller coaster of spectacular boss battles, stirring character moments, and a perfectly executed (though heart-wrenching) lead-in to Kingdom Hearts II. If only more games crossed the finish line with such vigor.

THE NOMINEES: A Boy and His Blob (Wii), Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS), Klonoa (Wii), The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS), New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii), Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)





BEST STORY/ WRITING

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

Shattered Memories may not be the scariest horror game out there, but it makes up for that with some masterful storytelling. The intriguing plot gradually unfolds with more nuance than we're accustomed to from our games, and the twist at the end is both shocking and moving. The innovative psychological profile adds a uniquely personal touch to the experience, though you won't even be cognizant of its effects until repeated playthroughs.

THE NOMINEES: Dead Space Extraction (Wii), Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS), The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii), Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS), Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS), Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)

OVERALL GAME OF THE YEAR

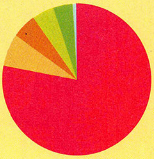
New Super Mario Bros. Wii

Having already nabbed the awards for Wii Game of the Year, Best Platformer, and Best Multiplayer, it should come as little surprise that playing New Super Mario Bros. Wii was the most fun you could have with a Nintendo system in 2009. Not only is its classic 2-D platforming a blast, but there's just so much to do, from simply beating Bowser to collecting every Yoshi Coin and uncovering all of the Mushroom Kingdom's many secrets. The game is also a triumphant example of the broad range of experiences that both Wii and Nintendo DS have become famous for, from modern 3-D adventures to retro-style action. NSMB Wii excels at being a bit of both, and provided a spectacular finish to an amazing decade of great Nintendo gaming.

THE NOMINEES: Art Style: Precipice (DW), Contra ReBirth (WW), Dragon Quest Wars (DW), Final Fantasy IV: The After Years (WW), Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS), Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS), Klonoa (Wii), The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS), Little King's Story (Wii), LostWinds: Winter of the Melodias (WW), MadWorld (Wii), Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS), Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again (DW), Mighty Flip Champs! (DW), New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii), NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits (WW), Punch-Out!! (Wii), Puzzle League Express (DW), Rhythm Heaven (DS), Scribblenauts (DS), Tales of Monkey Island (WW), Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii)

READERS' CHOICE

After nearly 10,000 of you cast your votes online, Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days emerged as this year's biggest story. It won every category in which it was nominated (even topping Mario and Zelda for Overall Game of the Year) and took home seven awards! Congratulations, Kingdom Hearts, and thanks to everyone who voted.

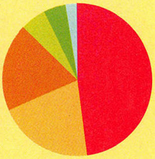


Wii GAME OF THE YEAR:

■ **New Super Mario Bros. Wii**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ MadWorld
- ■ Little King's Story
- ■ Punch-Out!!
- ■ Klonoa
- ■ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10

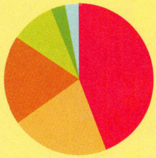


BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

■ **The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii)
- ■ Rhythm Heaven (DS)
- ■ Little King's Story (Wii)
- ■ Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)
- ■ Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS)

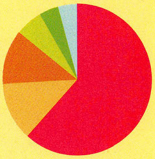


NINTENDO DS GAME OF THE YEAR:

■ **Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks
- ■ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
- ■ Scribblenauts
- ■ Rhythm Heaven
- ■ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars

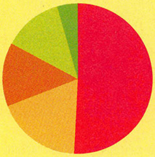


BEST SOUND/ VOICE ACTING:

■ **Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ Ghostbusters: The Video Game (Wii)
- ■ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare–Reflex Edition (Wii)
- ■ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)
- ■ Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
- ■ The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)

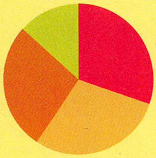


WiiWARE GAME OF THE YEAR:

■ **Final Fantasy IV: The After Years**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ Tales of Monkey Island
- ■ Contra ReBirth
- ■ LostWinds: Winter of the Melodias
- ■ NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits

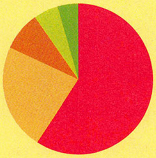


BEST MUSIC/ RHYTHM GAME:

■ **The Beatles: Rock Band (Wii)**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ Rhythm Heaven (DS)
- ■ Guitar Hero 5 (Wii)
- ■ DJ Hero (Wii)

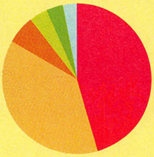


DSiWARE GAME OF THE YEAR:

■ **Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ Dragon Quest Wars
- ■ Mighty Flip Champs!
- ■ Art Style: Precipice
- ■ Puzzle League Express

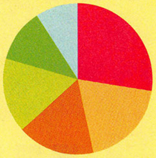


BEST ADVENTURE GAME:

■ **Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)
- ■ Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii)
- ■ Tales of Monkey Island (WW)
- ■ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS)
- ■ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)

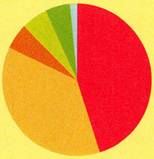


BEST Wii GRAPHICS:

■ **Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers**

RUNNERS UP:

- ■ Muramasa: The Demon Blade
- ■ A Boy and His Blob
- ■ Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles
- ■ MadWorld
- ■ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

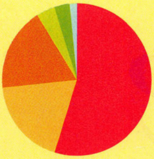


BEST RPG:

■ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Pokémon Platinum Version (DS)
■ Phantasy Star 0 (DS)
■ Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)
■ Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor (DS)
■ Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS)

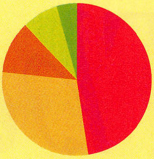


BEST NINTENDO DS GRAPHICS:

■ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days

RUNNERS UP:

■ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
■ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks
■ Phantasy Star 0
■ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
■ Naruto Shippuden Ninja Destiny 2

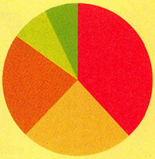


BEST STRATEGY GAME:

■ Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon (DS)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Little King's Story (Wii)
■ Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume (DS)
■ Knights in the Nightmare (DS)
■ Phantom Brave: We Meet Again (Wii)

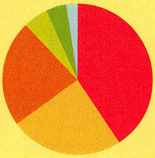


BEST SHOOTER:

■ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare–Reflex Edition (Wii)

RUNNERS UP:

■ The Conduit (Wii)
■ Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles (Wii)
■ Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
■ The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)

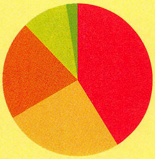


BEST SPORTS GAME:

■ Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games (DS)
■ Punch-Out!! (Wii)
■ Madden NFL 10 (Wii)
■ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii)
■ NHL 2K10 (Wii)

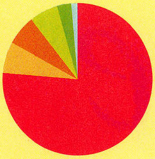


BEST ACTION GAME:

■ Sonic and the Black Knight (Wii)

RUNNERS UP:

■ MadWorld (Wii)
■ Muramasa: The Demon Blade (Wii)
■ Contra ReBirth (WW)
■ Gradius ReBirth (WW)

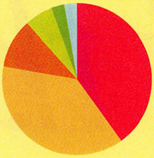


BEST PLATFORMER:

■ New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)

RUNNERS UP:

■ A Boy and His Blob (Wii)
■ Klonoa (Wii)
■ Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS)
■ LostWinds: Winter of the Melodias (WW)
■ NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits (WW)

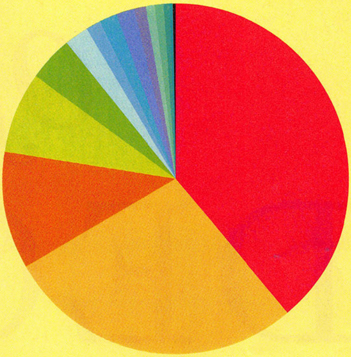


BEST PUZZLE GAME:

■ Scribblenauts (DS)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box (DS)
■ Boom Blox Bash Party (Wii)
■ Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes (DS)
■ Art Style: Precipice (DW)
■ Peggle: Dual Shot (DS)



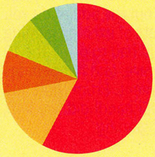
OVERALL GAME OF THE YEAR:

■ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)

RUNNERS UP:

■ New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)
■ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)
■ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS)
■ Scribblenauts (DS)
■ MadWorld (Wii)
■ Little King's Story (Wii)
■ Punch-Out!! (Wii)
■ Tales of Monkey Island (WW)
■ Rhythm Heaven (DS)
■ Klonoa (Wii)
■ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS)
■ Final Fantasy IV: The After Years (WW)
■ Dragon Quest Wars (DW)
■

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii)
Contra ReBirth (WW)
LostWinds: Winter of the Melodias (WW)
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again (DW)
Mighty Flip Champs! (DW)
NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits (WW)
Puzzle League Express (DW)
Art Style: Precipice (DW)

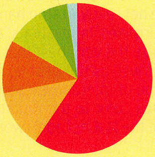


BEST MULTIPLAYER:

■ New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Wii Sports Resort (Wii)
■ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare–Reflex Edition (Wii)
■ Guitar Hero 5 (Wii)
■ Phantasy Star 0 (DS)
■ The Conduit (Wii)

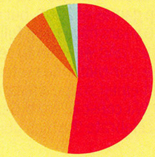


BEST NEW CHARACTER:

■ Xion - Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Jack–MadWorld (Wii)
■ Henry Hatsworth–Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS)
■ Little King–Little King's Story (Wii)
■ Morgan LeFlay–Tales of Monkey Island (WW)
■ Lexine–Dead Space Extraction (Wii)



BEST STORY/ WRITING:

■ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)

RUNNERS UP:

■ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS)
■ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)
■ Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)
■ Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
■ The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)

THE TOP 10 GAMES & MORE!

The BEST *of the* DECADE

The '00s are over. The '10s have begun. Find out which games are the best of the best.

On the preceding pages you've seen the Nintendo Power staff's and readers' picks for the top games of 2009, but we're not ready to stop handing out the adulation yet. The last 10 years have been full of surprises, innovations, and lots of exciting gaming experiences, and we want to recognize the very best that period had to offer: the 10 best games for Nintendo systems, as well as the people, hardware, and happenings that have helped shape the landscape of interactive entertainment. From Nintendo 64 to the Wii console, from Game Boy Color to the Nintendo DSi handheld, we look back and celebrate the high points of the last decade's worth of gaming.

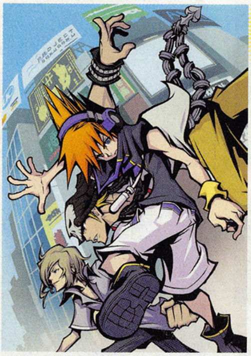
HIGHLIGHTS

2000

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

- Pokémon Stadium (N64)
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater (N64)
- Perfect Dark (N64)
- Pokémon Gold and Silver (GB/GBC)
- The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
- WWF No Mercy (N64)
- Banjo-Tooie (N64)

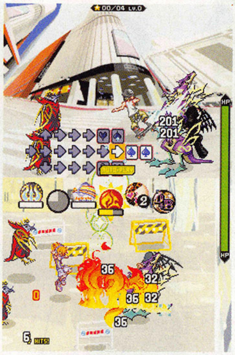
GAME *of the* YEAR



#10 The World Ends with You (DS)

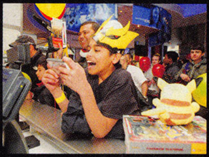
The Nintendo DS handheld was conceived by thinking outside the box, and few games exemplify that philosophy like The World Ends with You. It takes a smorgasbord of crazy ideas—controlling different characters on each screen simultaneously being the most noteworthy—and somehow gets them to meld together to create something wholly original and powerfully engaging. The intimate, character-driven quest is a nice change of pace from your typical save-the-world storyline, and the eclectic soundtrack fits like a glove, boldly mixing disparate music styles to fantastic effect. Please, Square Enix, may we have another?

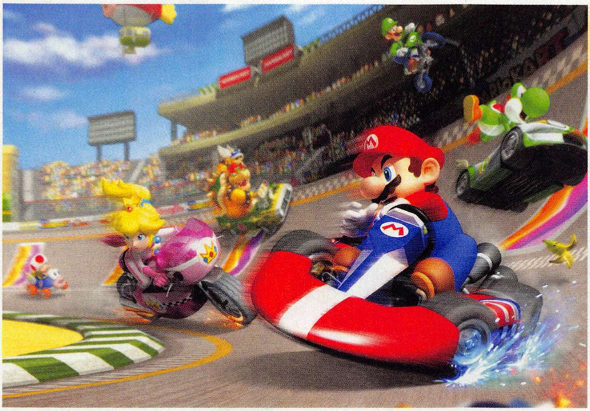
DEFINING MOMENT: When the insane, dual-screened battle system finally clicks and you suddenly realize just how brilliant it really is.



Craze of the Decade: Pokémon

Sure, Pokémon mania may have begun in North America in 1998, but the phenomenon continued to dominate the next decade. 2000 was the year that saw the release of the popular Pokémon Gold and Silver Versions, and the craze continued to grow from there. Fueled by a hit trading card game, TV series, 12 movies, game sequels, and spin-off titles like Pokémon Stadium, Pokémon Ranger, and Pokémon Rumble, fans were all too eager to catch 'em all. Many imitators have come and gone since then, but Pikachu and company are still going strong.





#9 Mario Kart Wii (Wii)

It wouldn't be out of the question to see any of the last decade's Mario Kart titles on this list, but we've had the most fun with the latest, Mario Kart Wii. The game has a good variety of tracks, karts, characters, and power-ups, and the controls are rock-solid. (We prefer playing with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers, ourselves.) Add the fact that up to 12 players can race against each other via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection (Mario Kart DS supports only 4 players online), and you have the definitive kart-racing title.

DEFINING MOMENT: When you've used a mushroom to dodge an incoming spiny shell.

HIGHLIGHTS

2001

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
MARCH
APRIL
MAY
JUNE
JULY
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER

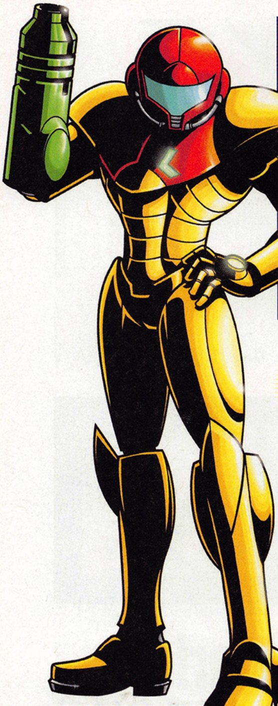
Game Boy Advance

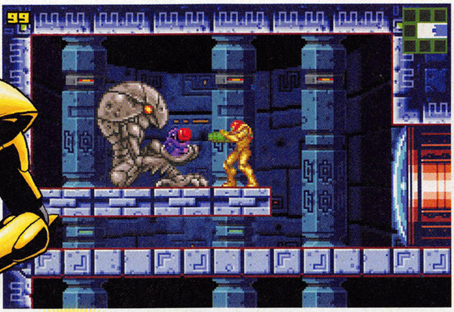
Nintendo GameCube

Paper Mario (N64)
The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages (GBC)
The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons (GBC)
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon (GBA)
Super Mario Advance (GBA)
Advance Wars (GBA)
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader (GCN)
Golden Sun (GBA)
Luigi's Mansion (GCN)
Super Monkey Ball (GCN)
Pikmin (GCN)

GAME *of the* YEAR

Super Smash Bros. Melee (GCN)

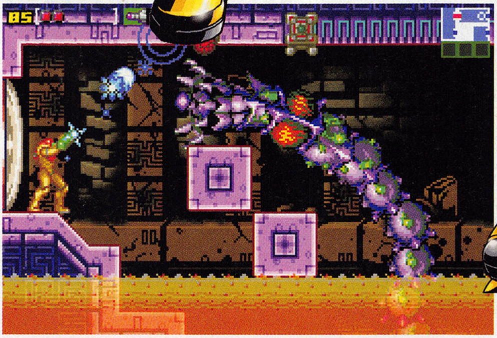


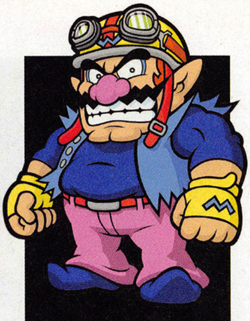


#8 Metroid: Zero Mission (GBA)

This GBA remake of Samus's original NES adventure is not only one of her best titles, but one of the decade's top examples of great 2-D gaming. Zero Mission is classic Metroid gameplay at its purest, and also at its most advanced. In fact, with totally redone graphics, new level designs, and a long list of additional moves and features—including a surprise new ending—it's hard to call the game a remake. The Metroid mix of mazelike rooms, sci-fi action, and tricky platforming has often been imitated, but has never been done better than this.

DEFINING MOMENT: Samus sheds her armor and gets sneaky.





Character of the Decade: Wario

Although he made his debut as the antagonist in 1992's Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins for Game Boy, Wario has spent the last decade proving that he is more than a stereotypical baddie. He's actually more of a troublemaker than an outright villain, and his wild personality and actions—highlighted by rude comments, impatience, garlic belches, nose picking, and gluttony—have endeared the big guy to us. The rotund antihero isn't afraid to try new things, either: just witness the insanely hilarious WarioWare games. Who else could star in a series so quirky, bizarre, and innovative? And furthermore, who else could use the power of farts to defeat guys like Mario, Link, Samus, and Captain Falcon? That's right: nobody.

HIGHLIGHTS

2002

JANUARY

FEBRUARY
- Sonic Advance (GBA)

MARCH

APRIL

MAY
- Resident Evil (GCN)

JUNE
- Shantae (GBC)

JULY

AUGUST
- Super Mario Sunshine (GCN)

SEPTEMBER
- Animal Crossing (GCN)
- Star Fox Adventures (GCN)

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER
- Metroid Prime (GCN)
- Metroid Fusion (GBA)

DECEMBER
- The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past/Four Swords (GBA)

GAME of the YEAR

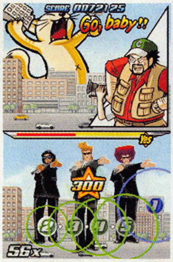
Third-Party Developer of the Decade: Capcom Production Studio 4/Clover Studio/PlatinumGames

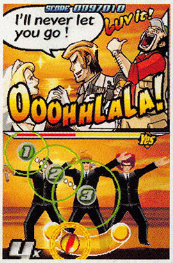
Fresh off of Shinji Mikami's genre-defining successes with the Resident Evil and Dino Crisis series, Capcom kicked off a new decade by placing him in charge of its brand-new Production Studio 4. Focusing primarily on GameCube development, the studio churned out such memorable classics as Resident Evil 4, Killer7, Viewtiful Joe, and the early games of the Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney series. But many of the studio's critical hits were commercial flops, leading to a series of reorganizations within the company. Along with most of Production Studio 4's key staff, Mikami landed at Capcom's new Clover Studio, which was tasked with creating imaginative new IP for the company. Titles like Viewtiful Joe 2 and Okami met with critical success but middling sales, leading Capcom to dissolve the studio in 2007. Creative masterminds Shinji Mikami, Hideki Kamiya, and Atsushi Inaba opted not to rejoin Capcom, and instead led much of the staff to new studio PlatinumGames, where they partnered with Sega to create titles such as MadWorld and Infinite Space. Whatever the the team is called, their principles of boundless creativity and consummate craftsmanship have always remained intact.

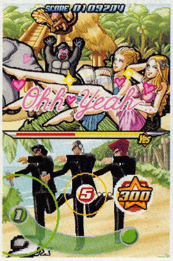
#7 Elite Beat Agents (DS)

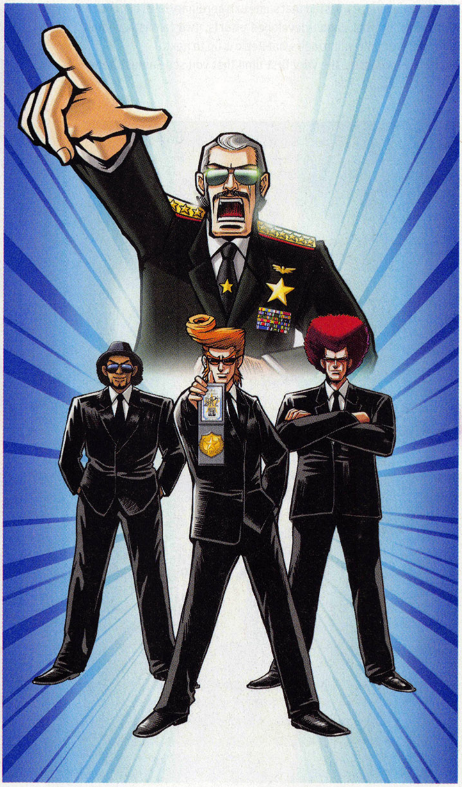
Music and rhythm games exploded in the past decade, and one of the finest examples of the genre is Nintendo's Elite Beat Agents. The musical selection is great and the timing-based tap-and-drag action is perfect for the DS, but Elite Beat Agents is so much more thanks to the inclusion of the awesomely heroic agents themselves and the silly situations they had to overcome. The title set a high bar for music games (especially on handheld systems), and we'd say it has yet to be beaten.

DEFINING MOMENT: The tearjerker of tearjerkers, in which you brighten a girl's holiday after the loss of her father to the tune of Chicago's "You're the Inspiration."









HIGHLIGHTS

2003

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
MARCH
APRIL
MAY
JUNE
JULY
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER

Game Boy Advance SP

Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire Versions (GBA)

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (GCN)

GAME of the YEAR

Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow (GBA)

WarioWare. Inc. Mega Microgame$ (GBA)

Soul Calibur II (GCN)

Billy Hatcher & the Giant Egg (GCN)

Viewtiful Joe (GCN)

Fire Emblem (GBA)

Mario Kart: Double Dash!! (GCN)

Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga (GBA)

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (GCN)

Beyond Good & Evil (GCN)

#6 Metroid Prime (GCN)

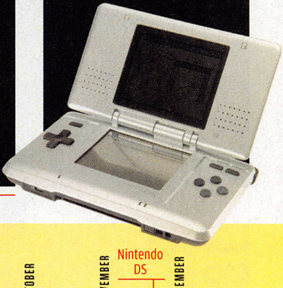
You could almost hear the collective groan of gamers around the country when Nintendo announced that not only was Metroid going first-person, but that the beloved series was being handed to a rookie development studio in Texas. Fortunately, Retro Studios proved the naysayers wrong, delivering a masterpiece more than worthy of a spot in the franchise's storied legacy. Metroid Prime deftly retained the spirit of its predecessors while immersing us in its incredible 3-D world. Better still, it boasted that same extraordinary level of polish as Nintendo's internal, Japan-developed efforts. Two fantastic sequels followed. We can't wait to see what Retro is up to next.

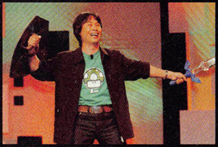
DEFINING MOMENT: The very first time that you see Samus's reflection in your visor.

29
ENERGY
Energy Low

System of the Decade: Nintendo DS

The Nintendo DS handheld is the system that pushed the limits of what gaming could be. With two screens, a touch interface, and a microphone, as well as the usual Control Pad and buttons, it opened up the options for gaming creativity like never before. With such flexibility, the DS became the most popular gaming machine in the world, catering to players of all types with experiences that ranged from the traditional (such as New Super Mario Bros.) to the completely unheard of (such as Nintendogs and Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day). Further refinements of the DS have only served to make it better. The system also helped set the stage for the similarly groundbreaking Wii console.





Event of the Decade: Nintendo's E3 2004 Press Conference — Unveiling of Twilight Princess

There are lots of video game happenings every year: the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the Tokyo Game Show, and countless press conferences and publisher-specific events. Most of the time what's unveiled there is forgotten once the next big thing rolls around. But nobody who witnessed Nintendo's E3 2004 press conference is going to forget the reveal of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. As soon as the audience saw Link's revamped appearance and realized that they were witnessing a new Zelda game for the first time, it erupted with applause, yells, and cheers, complete with a much-deserved standing ovation.

HIGHLIGHTS

2004

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
MARCH
APRIL
MAY
JUNE
JULY
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
Nintendo DS
DECEMBER

Sonic Heroes (GCN)

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles (GCN)

Metroid: Zero Mission (GBA)

Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes (GCN)

Tales of Symphonia (GCN)

Pikmin 2 (GCN)

Pokémon FireRed and LeafGreen Versions (GBA)

Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door (GCN)

Metroid Prime 2 Echoes (GCN)

GAME of the YEAR

Super Mario 64 DS (DS)

Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories (GBA)

#5 Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii)

The Super Smash Bros. series reinvented all the rules of fighting games. There are no life meters to deplete and no complex joystick motions, and battles frequently aren't even one-on-one. What started on N64 was vastly improved upon for GameCube, and then polished to the *n*th degree in Super Smash Bros. Brawl on Wii. It has pretty much anything a Nintendo fan could want: an all-star cast, backgrounds from your favorite games, a mindblowing soundtrack, an epic story mode with stunning cut-scenes, hundreds of collectible bonus goodies, the ability to make your own stages, and even classic game demos. Brawl may contain more gameplay goodness than any other title out there.

DEFINING MOMENT: Mario and Sonic finally facing off in a true throwdown.

Surprise of the Decade: The name of the Wii console

For many months, everybody had referred to Nintendo's next game system by its code name, Revolution, and most assumed that's what the final system would also be called. They couldn't have been more wrong. In April 2006, Nintendo announced the system's final name: Wii. Gamers couldn't believe it. Some were confused. Others giggled. But the name made perfect sense given the all-encompassing nature of the console. Almost four years later, the Wii system and name have become a part of global culture, and it'd be hard to imagine the system ever being called anything else.

Wii™

HIGHLIGHTS

2005

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

Game Boy Micro

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap (GBA)

Resident Evil 4 (GCN)

GAME *of the* YEAR

Nintendogs (DS)

Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (DS)

Trauma Center: Under the Knife (DS)

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (DS)

Mario Kart DS (DS)

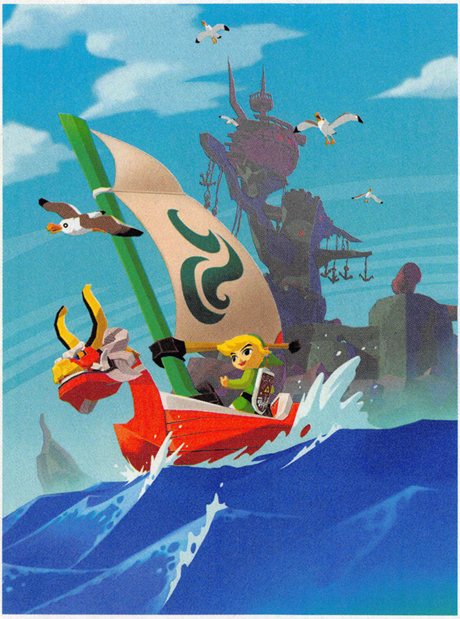
Sonic Rush (DS)

Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time (DS)

#4 The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (GCN)

This game is so amazing that it stands as one of the decade's top titles despite a fairly significant flaw: the tedious work of sailing across the ocean. However, the adventure that awaits you at each destination is always well worth the trip. The Wind Waker provided us with some of our fondest Zelda moments, and it remains one of gaming's top artistic achievements, with an unmatched cartoon style that looks as impressive today as it did in 2003. While many fans breathed a sigh of relief with the return of more realistic graphics in Twilight Princess, The Wind Waker stands as one of the series's most daring and innovative installments, and that's saying something.

DEFINING MOMENT: What? Hyrule is at the bottom of the ocean?



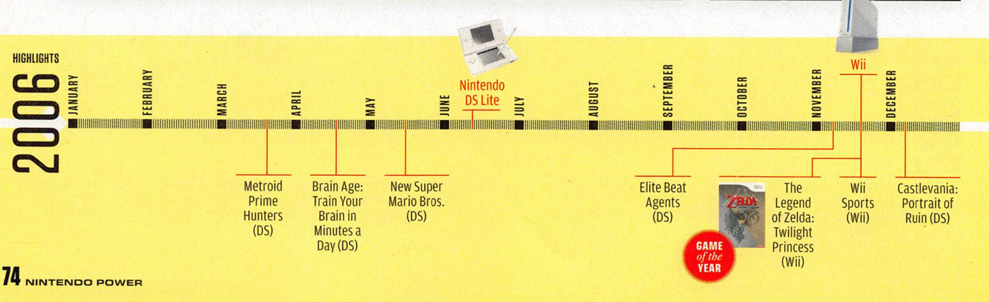
Defend
R
Attack
FREE
015

R
Attack
068

Innovation of the Decade: Wii Remote

In what was arguably Nintendo's most creative period, the revolutionary Wii Remote controller stood as the company's most influential new idea. It changed the way we play, and judging by the unprecedented response to Wii and the rush to duplicate the remote by Nintendo's competitors, motion control is here to stay. The device expanded the definitions of "game" and "gamer" by both broadening and deepening the interactive experience. And although not every experiment with this new control style has worked, the successes have been astounding. If you ask us, we've only scratched the surface of what motion control can offer.

POWER
HOME
Wii



Nintendo DS Lite

Wii

Metroid Prime Hunters (DS)

Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day (DS)

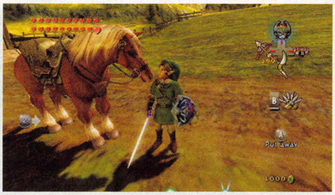
New Super Mario Bros. (DS)

Elite Beat Agents (DS)

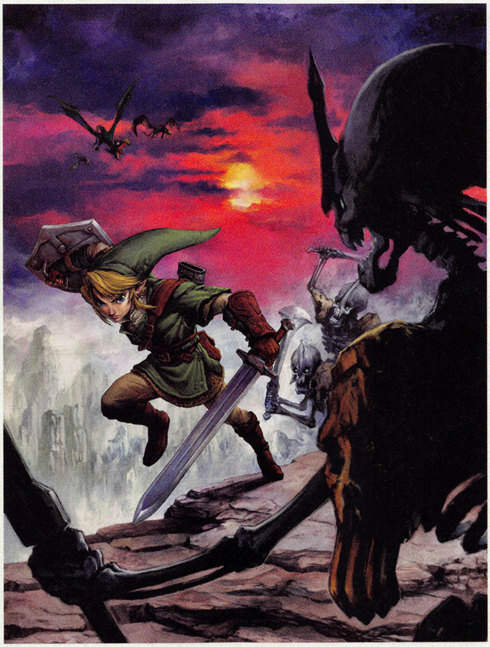
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii)

Wii Sports (Wii)

Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin (DS)



#3 The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii)



In many ways, Twilight Princess is the ultimate realization of the Zelda series on a home console. In an attempt to outdo the high-water mark of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (N64), the folks at Nintendo crafted the biggest, most absorbing version of Hyrule yet, and filled it with instantly classic swordplay, puzzles, and tools (gotta love those Double Clawshots). A darker story took the series into compelling new territory, and the incredible visuals delivered the detailed fantasy look that fans demanded. The fact that it also brought us one of the series's best supporting characters (Midna) is icing on the cake. We can't wait to see where Zelda goes on Wii from here.

DEFINING MOMENT: Link, trapped in wolf form, carrying the injured Midna to Hyrule Castle while the elegant and somber "Midna's Lament" plays in the background.

Creator of the Decade: Eiji Aonuma

Talk about pressure. Imagine the most revered person in the history of your profession handing you the reins to arguably his greatest creation, which is loved by millions of people around the world. That's essentially what happened to Eiji Aonuma, who became the shepherd for The Legend of Zelda beginning with 2000's Majora's Mask. Ten years later, the series remains atop its perch as the pinnacle of the medium. From The Wind Waker to Twilight Princess to Spirit Tracks, Aonuma and his team have consistently delivered one memorable adventure after another. In our experience, he also happens to be one of the nicest developers you'll ever meet.

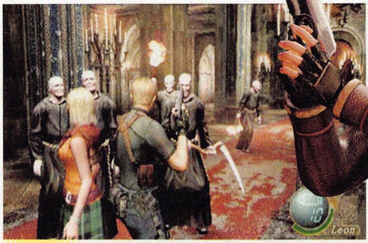
HIGHLIGHTS

2007

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

- Final Fantasy VI Advance (GBA)
- Super Paper Mario (Wii)
- Pokémon Diamond and Pearl Versions (DS)
- Metroid Prime 3: Corruption (Wii)
- The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass (DS)
- Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure (Wii)
- Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock (Wii)
- Super Mario Galaxy (Wii)
- Contra 4 (DS)
- NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams (Wii)

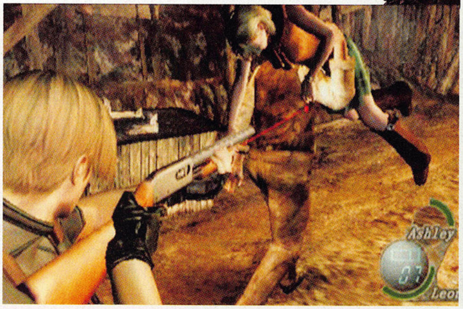
GAME of the YEAR

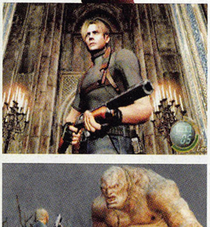


#2 Resident Evil 4 (GCN)

After numerous samey iterations since its debut in 1996, the Resident Evil franchise had started to become stagnant. Jump ahead to 2005 and the release of Resident Evil 4, a game that revolutionized the survival-horror series with a new over-the-shoulder camera perspective, smarter enemies, and a bevy of extraordinary set pieces (not to mention, it transformed naive rookie cop Leon S. Kennedy into one of the biggest badasses ever). Resident Evil 4 isn't just one of the best games of the past decade; it's one of the best of all time.

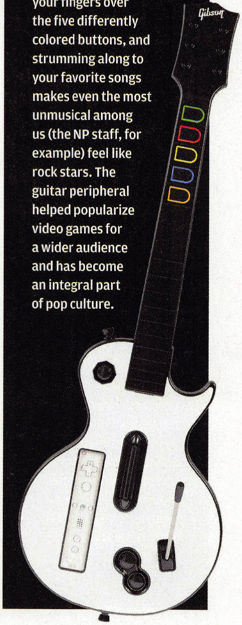
DEFINING MOMENT: The first time you enter the village at the beginning of the game, get overrun by the weapons-wielding townsfolk, and hear a chainsaw revving up.





Peripheral of the Decade: The Guitar Controller

We've seen a lot of peripherals in the past decade (our office is overflowing with stuff for Wii alone), but no accessory has had as much an impact in the past decade as RedOctane's Guitar Hero controller. Holding the plastic guitar in your hands, moving your fingers over the five differently colored buttons, and strumming along to your favorite songs makes even the most unmusical among us (the NP staff, for example) feel like rock stars. The guitar peripheral helped popularize video games for a wider audience and has become an integral part of pop culture.



HIGHLIGHTS

2008

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

WiiWare launches

- No More Heroes (Wii)
- Professor Layton and the Curious Village (DS)
- Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii)

GAME of the YEAR

- Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword (DS)
- The World Ends with You (DS)
- Mario Kart Wii (Wii)
- Boom Blox (Wii)
- Wii Fit (Wii)
- Mega Man 9 (WW)
- World of Goo (WW)
- Wii Music (Wii)
- Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia (DS)
- Animal Crossing: City Folk (Wii)
- Rock Band 2 (Wii)

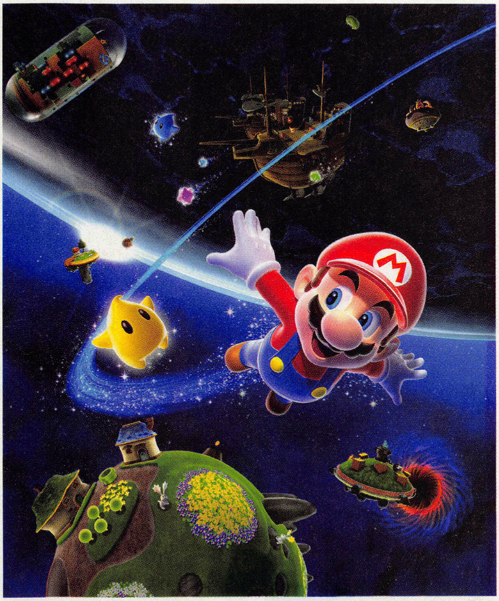
Series of the Decade: The Legend of Zelda

With 10 classic games spread across 6 different systems, no other series was as prolific or consistently great as The Legend of Zelda. When you consider the exceptional amount of time and effort required to develop a Zelda game, it's remarkable that Nintendo managed to average a new installment each year while maintaining the series's especially high standards. From Majora's Mask on N64 to Four Swords Adventures on GameCube to Twilight Princess on Wii, every entry offered something fresh while staying faithful to the tried-and-true gameplay that fans crave. That record of meeting and exceeding fans' expectations time and time again leaves no doubt that, for the past 10 years, The Legend of Zelda set the standard by which excellence was measured.

#1 Super Mario Galaxy (Wii)

Mario's landmark Wii adventure might be as close as any game can come to perfection. At once comfortingly familiar and startlingly brand-new, Galaxy is an unbeatable example of how a long-running series can continue to deliver the kind of fun that fans expect while staying fresh. 3-D gaming was still in its infancy when we rang in the year 2000, and Galaxy showcases just how far modern games have come. Players no longer have to be burdened with wonky camera controls or sacrifice graphic detail for polygonal worlds; titles like Galaxy show us that anything is possible with enough talent and raw nerve. We can't think of a better game to kick off the next decade than this year's Super Mario Galaxy 2.

DEFINING MOMENT: Super Luigi Galaxy!



×25
LIFE
2
×0
×11
×4

HIGHLIGHTS

2009

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

- MadWorld (Wii)
- Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS)

MARCH

- DSiWare launches

APRIL

- Nintendo DSi

MAY

- Klonoa (Wii)

JUNE

- Little King's Story (Wii)
- Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

JULY

- Tales of Monkey Island Chapter 1 (WW)

AUGUST

- Contra ReBirth (WW)

SEPTEMBER

- Kingdom Hearts: 358/2 Days (DS)

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

- New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii) — GAME *of the* YEAR

- The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)
- Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)

DECEMBER

- Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth (WW)

37

Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
March 22, 1963

BIRTHPLACE
Bay City, MI

POSITION
Senior creative director, EA Tiburon

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating Smash TV and NBA Jam, setting arcades on fire (figuratively)

FAVORITE FOOD
Macaroni and cheese

CURRENT PROJECTS
Future football titles

Mark Turmell

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

When we met with the new NBA Jam development team for last month's cover story, it was obvious that all of them idolized series creator Mark Turmell. And for good reason. The original NBA Jam stands as one of the greatest arcade games of all time, dazzling players with its mix of crazy, over-the-top action and cutting-edge digitized graphics. Emblematic of the game's impact, phrases like "He's on fire!" and "Boom shakalaka!" became a regular part of the sports lexicon. Turmell brought the same successful formula to football with NFL Blitz, and is also responsible for countless other coin-op hits. He joined EA's Tiburon studio last year, but is also lending creative input to his admirers at EA Canada for the return of NBA Jam.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you first become involved in the game industry?

MARK TURMELL
I go all the way back to the beginning! When I was a little kid, the only thing I wanted for Christmas was the $99 black-and-white Pong game. That hooked me and I soon purchased an Apple II computer with a cassette drive and began learning how to program in Assembly language. My first game was called Sneakers, and it ended up being a number-one hit on the Apple II in 1981. Then in 1982, as a teenager, I moved to California, began developing Atari VCS cartridges, started working for Activision, and never looked back.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I originally wanted to be an architect, but as a teenager, and having $10,000 royalty checks coming in the mail each month, I decided to pursue video game development!

You spent much of your early career working on arcade titles. Why do you think the popularity of arcades has waned over the years? Do you ever see them making a comeback?
Arcades began to die off when developers stopped innovating! And as soon as console hardware became more powerful than the arcade hardware, and their visuals became better, there was no saving it. It was sad to see most of the arcades close up, but there will always be a few locations for interesting and fun coin-operated games. It's just a very small business now.

Smash TV was set in the year 1999, which was about when reality shows really did start taking off (albeit without half-men/half-tanks, unfortunately). Do you feel prophetic, and what do you foresee for us nine years from now?
I do feel prophetic in a way, but it's toward developing easy-to-play dual-joystick games, and also violence in video games! Smash TV was one of the first games to be blowing up boss monsters in a gruesome way, and we took a lot of heat for that at the time. Interestingly, my art partner John Tobias then co-created Mortal Kombat, while I created NBA Jam.

Nine years is a lifetime in this industry, and our consumer has splintered into many different categories. But it's 100% safe to say that simple, pick-up-and-play, short-duration games will be a huge segment. Attention spans and competition for time are all driving games to be shorter in length. So even if you enjoy story-based games, you will begin seeing them in smaller chunks like a comic-book series. Episodic gaming, you could say.

When we last chatted, it sounded like the development team for the original NBA Jam was fairly small. Do you recall how many people worked on it, exactly? And how did developing with a small group compare with today's larger teams (for better or for worse)?
NBA Jam was created with four programmers, four artists, and one sound designer. It was clearly easier to manage a small group of developers, but because we have so many talented developers at Tiburon, I can focus almost exclusively on the "fun factor" in our football titles, and make those games even more accessible to the audience.

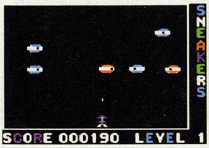
What prompted you to include politicians as playable characters in the original Jam?
We started off putting ourselves into the game, juicing up our stats a bit, and trying to keep them secret. Remember, this was pre-Internet to a large degree, so these types of features remained secret for a long time, and players would have to learn of them through magazines and word of mouth. Because players were so excited to find non-NBA athletes in the game, we sought approval from the NBA to include more, and because politicians are free and in the "public domain," they were easier to include without approvals!

With NBA Jam set for a big comeback, would you like to see any of your other previous franchises make a return?
Yes! NFL Blitz appealed to a crowd that is not being served well currently. It's not the hard-hitting

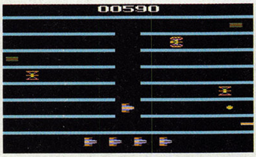
> *"Arcades began to die off when developers stopped innovating!... It was sad to see most of the arcades close up."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

Mark Turmell started developing video games more than 29 years ago, when he was just 18. He spent much of his career at Midway, where he churned out one arcade sensation after another, including Smash TV, NBA Jam, and NFL Blitz.



SNEAKERS
1981, APPLE II
DESIGNER



TURMOIL
1982, ATARI VCS
DESIGNER

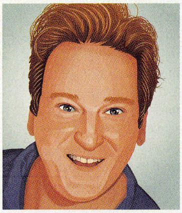
BRAND NEW TOASTER

SMASH TV
1990, ARCADE
DESIGNER

PIPPEN
INSERT COINS
INSERT COINS
INSERT COINS
SHOT
88

NBA JAM
1993, ARCADE
DESIGNER

Power Profiles



tackles that made NFL Blitz successful, but rather the easy, pick-up-and-play, 10-minute experience that opened up football games to a different audience. So that one definitely needs to return. My last basketball title was the original NBA Ballers, and that one-on-one experience would also be a blast to resurrect. We had plans for a Smash HD TV sequel, but those rights are now owned by Warner Brothers.

You've worked on quite a few arcade-style sports titles. What is it that appeals to you about that game style as opposed to the more simlike approach?
I love to make people physically react and make their hands sweat when playing a game. If they wince, smile, laugh, scream, or swear, I feel I'm doing my job. So I've always focused on those "highlight reel" moments because that's where you get the most reaction from a player. And even though our football titles are simulation in style, there are tons of "highlight reel" situations we intend to expand on and show to the player. The core rules of football translate perfectly to being a fun video game experience, and that's what we're focused on.

How did you get involved with the WWF WrestleMania arcade game? Are you or were you a pro-wrestling fan?
Definitely a fan! My art partner, Sal Divita, and I wanted to do a WWF game real bad, and for that game we developed a fresh approach to animation playback that survives all the way to today's WWE games! Wrestlers are quite often amazing athletes and great showmen. I love slamming guys into each other in the wrestling games and making cool moves happen, but there is so much on the TV show that doesn't translate well to a video game. So it's a tough nut to crack. I've enjoyed working on wrestling titles.

What were some of the funniest or most unusual experiences you had during the process of filming the wrestlers for the game?
Lots of great stories! Yokozuna trying to run on a treadmill so we could get a long enough run cycle, Undertaker requiring a bottle of whiskey before he could work, Mr. Perfect missing his plane connection multiple times, Doink the clown being upset about Dink being brought onto the show, trying to get Lex Luger to be less stiff, and of course seeing Mr. Fuji in full gear work the crowd into a frenzy while drinking in local Chicago bars.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
The moment-to-moment gameplay where your character interacts with other characters is the part I love. Whether it's juking by a defender in basketball, drop-kicking a wrestler in the chest, or diving for a tackle in football, I just love making those little moments feel "right." Injecting more of those moments into the EA football games is now my mission.

> *"NFL Blitz appealed to a crowd that is not being served well currently.... So that one definitely needs to return."*

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while developing a game, what's your process for working through it?
This happens almost daily! It may seem odd, but I actually begin solving and refining design problems when I go to bed each night! As soon as the constant clutter and chatter of daily life drifts away, I can truly focus on the problem at hand and formulate an approach. Each night, I ponder solutions and write them down as needed.

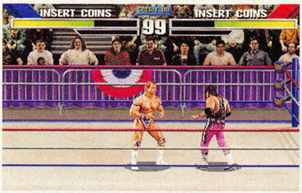
What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
Certainly Shigeru Miyamoto is number one. His approach to making the game "feel right," even before any graphics are created, is brilliant, and leads to fun and successful titles. I've met him and exchanged philosophies, and I try to emulate his approach when it comes to moment-to-moment gameplay.

But I've learned the most from Eugene Jarvis, the creator of Defender, Robotron, and the Cruis'n USA series. He is a genius, and has a way of cutting to the heart of a problem that simplifies any discussion. I was fortunate to work with him on Smash TV for a while, and still reach out to him to this day for his wisdom.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
For me, James Cameron is the best filmmaker ever! His ability to touch the mass market is second to none, and he is driven to bring quality to every aspect of his films. But for pure entertainment value, and sheer volume, no one beats Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the creators of South Park. They are geniuses and I look forward to their future works.

Finally, if you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
I'd love to be able to split into different pieces and be at multiple places at the same time, but in the end, you just can't beat invisibility. You could do so much good with that power.

GAMEOGRAPHY



WWF WRESTLEMANIA: THE ARCADE GAME
1995, ARCADE
DESIGNER

2:00 BAL 0
1ST MIA 0
TURBO
TURBO

NFL BLITZ
1997, ARCADE
DESIGNER

JAMES
O'NEAL
GARNETT
PIERCE
15
Boston Celtics

NBA JAM
2010, Wii
CREATIVE CONSULTANT

Wi-Fi
LAP 1/2
adidas
HUDSON
Good
P2
EXCELLENT
P1
Disco Knights
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P2 3rd
158 km/h
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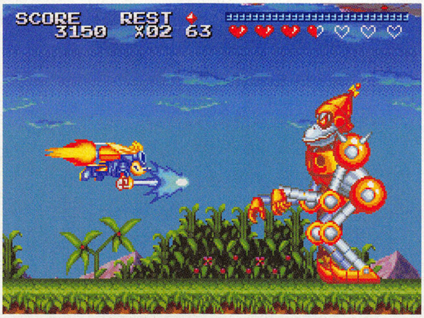
Don't worry, kids; I never die. I just play possum.

Sparkster

One of the finest rocket-propelled marsupial simulators ever.

KONAMI
SPARKSTER
SUPER NINTENDO

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
RELEASE DATE: **OCTOBER 1994**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **64, 66, 80**
NUMBER OF BOXING ROBOT BOSSES: **1**



Sparkster knows that when going up against a lanky, mechanical monkey, it's good to be glowing at both ends.

Sparkster's box declares that he's "the baddest opossum to ever strap on a rocket pack." That may sound like a bold claim, but we're at a loss to name any other opossums that might be badder. When your skill set is as highly specialized as Sparkster's, you're bound to be the best (or "baddest," as it were).

That's not to take anything away from Sparkster's success, though. He may not have had much competition in the rocket-wearing-opossum field, but that doesn't mean he slacked off during his game appearances. Actually, in a time filled with countless mediocre critter-based platformers, Sparkster was one of the few titles that made a good impression.

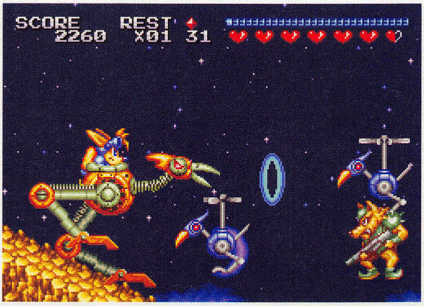
Recently, Sparkster has had cameos in games like New International Track & Field for the Nintendo DS handheld, but during the 16-bit era he was a fighter. His rocket pack allowed him to fly in short, quick bursts, and he was armed with a beam-shooting sword that he used to take on an army of evil wolves.

Like many Konami games of the day, Sparkster features excellent music and gorgeous, colorful graphics. The rocket-pack gimmick is a load of fun. It works equally well for tearing through a line of enemies and for accessing those hard-to-reach areas. Just be careful when using it in an enclosed space. Sparkster is quick to ricochet off of walls (and ceilings and floors) when traveling at a high speed, so an ill-timed rocket blast can send you bounding into danger.

Even though the jetpack can be tricky to control, you need it while exploring the well-designed and varied stages. There are plenty of standard side-scrolling levels, plus you'll travel through a puzzle-filled pyramid, a stage composed of giant musical instruments, and a section where Sparkster rides on the back of robotic ostriches. There's even a vertically scrolling shooting stage to mix things up a bit.

Unfortunately, despite earning good reviews, Sparkster never really caught on. Because of this, many people missed out on the game. Platformer fans should track it down. It's definitely a forgotten gem in the Super NES library.

—PHIL T.

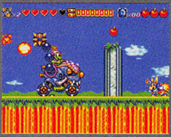


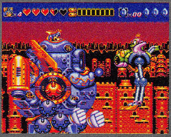
SEGA
KONAMI
GENESIS
SPARKSTER
GA

THE OTHER SPARKSTER

Super NES owners may not have known it, but this game was not Sparkster's first outing. He appeared a year earlier in a game called Rocket Knight Adventures for the Sega Genesis. Luckily, Konami decided to release a sequel on both systems. Even though the two versions share the same name, however, they are completely different games.

We're not talking a slight graphical difference here. No, the Genesis version of Sparkster features completely new levels, enemies, and attacks. Even the control scheme is different from that of the Super NES game. Of course, we're not complaining. The Genesis version is also terrific, so we'll happily play it as well.





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REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

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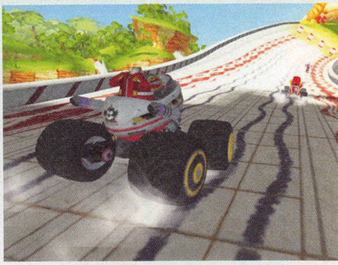
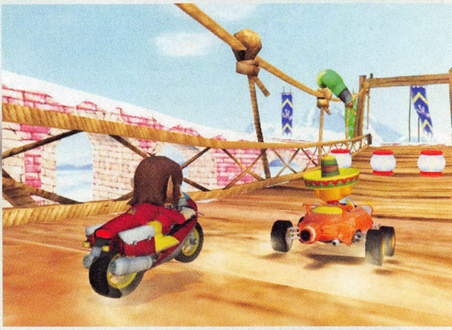
Sea Side Hill
SEA
5

Can Sega compete in the kart-racing arena? The answer's a page away!





Fast Company

SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

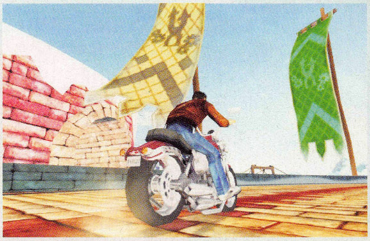
Sega is well known for its racing games, having created the likes of the classic Daytona USA and Sega Rally. The company has also produced some of the most beloved, recognizable characters in gaming. That said, we're not sure what took Sega so long to marry the two into a mascot kart racer...but we're glad the game is finally here.

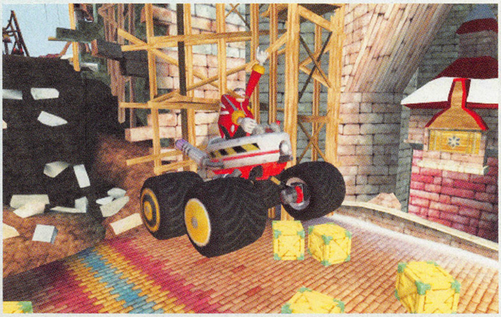
Glad because it's something we've always wanted, it seemed like a total no-brainer, and it turned out pretty darned well. It certainly helped that Sumo Digital—a British studio staffed by many a Sega fan, and responsible for the home version of OutRun 2—was tapped to create the game. These folks know Sega and racing, so, right from the get-go, Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing is brimming with familiar faces and style, and is immediately fun and easy to play.

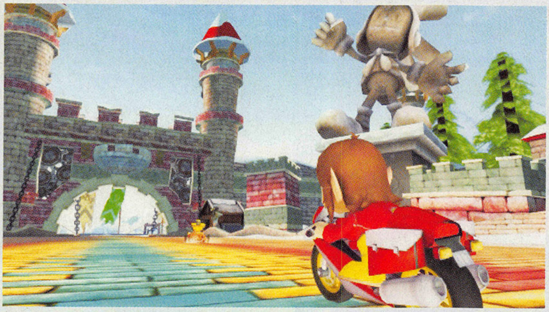
The game has a pretty standard selection of modes—Championship, Single Race, Time Trial, Versus (including Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection and split-screen options)—but adds a Challenge mode akin to the one found in another Sumo-developed Sega mascot mash-up, Sega All-Stars Tennis. It's unique in that it presents specific goals (collect a certain number of coins before the timer expires, for example) that, like victories in the other modes, reward players with Sega Miles, the in-game currency.

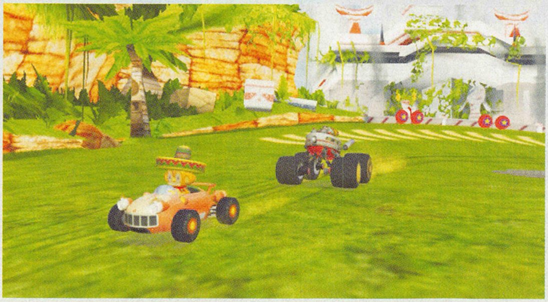
Sega Miles can be spent in the game's store to purchase more playable characters from a variety of Sega franchises, including Virtua Fighter, Space Channel 5, House of the Dead, and Shenmue. As with any title

[Below] This is as close as we're going to get to a Shenmue 3.









that has a focus on fan service, we wish there were, oh, twice as many characters to unlock than there are—is it too much to ask for the F-14 from After Burner? (Well, maybe.) Sega Miles also unlock Championship-mode tracks for use in multiplayer competition, and can be used to buy the songs associated with those tracks to further customize your races.

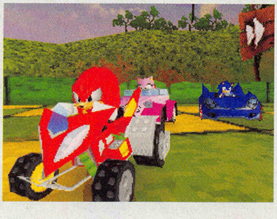
The aforementioned courses are mostly great. We say "mostly" because there's some really nice track design on many of them—even staying true to elements such as the Sonic games' loops and corkscrews—but a few are just too similar. It's also a shame that there isn't a better variety of courses based on the games whose characters appear in this title. There are Sonic, Billy Hatcher, House of the Dead, Super Monkey Ball, Samba de Amigo, and Jet Set Radio Future tracks, but nothing from, say, Space Channel 5 or even Virtua Fighter to add some diversity.

As for actually racing the tracks, it's a lot of fun. The game has really good control, drawing on the time-tested formula of each racer's ride having different weight, handling, speed, acceleration, etc. There's a character/car combo for every style of player—even motorcycles. No matter what you choose to get behind the wheel (or handlebars) of, the game features a satisfying power-sliding mechanic. It's easier to execute than manually drifting in Mario Kart Wii (from which the feature is clearly derived) and grants you a little more side-to-side movement during slides. Nearly all the courses feature great jumps—which makes us wish for a little more control over the karts/bikes in midair.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing is a pretty game for the most part—only the courses inspired by House of the Dead and the mechanical-themed zones from Sonic seem uninspired. The rest are colorful, often thrill-packed, and filled with little nods to the series they're based on. The sense of speed is great, although you can't help but wonder how much more satisfying the racing would have been had Sumo been able to hit 60 frames per second.

All in all, Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing isn't quite the fan paradise it could have been, but it's a very good racer that makes great use of classic Sega franchises. We wouldn't mind a sequel with more franchises and tracks included—can we see a show of hands for Golden Axe?

—RANDY N.



Cram Session

SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING

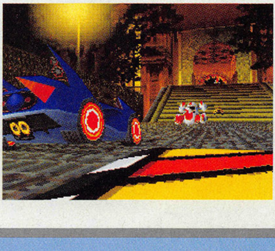
RATING: 6.0

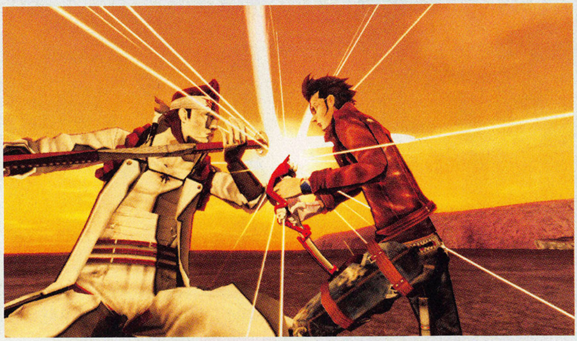
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

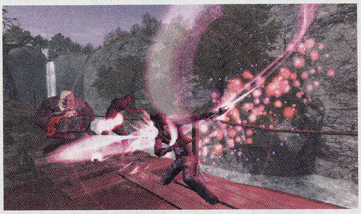
You might think the fact that this DS title is based on the solid Wii title by the sane name would be a good thing. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

On the one hand, the DS version has all of the characters and tracks from the Wii release—which is very nice, and kind of impressive. However, most of the courses just don't work when brought to the smaller screen; they needed some substantial retooling. In some places it's hard to make out where to go, the game is chuggy in other parts, and the control doesn't feel as spot-on—rather than a satisfying drift, you get a weird fishtail.

If you love the console version and have to play it on the go, there's some value here. Otherwise, this is definitely just middle-of-the-road material. **—RANDY N.**







Crazier, Sexier, Cooler

NO MORE HEROES 2: DESPERATE STRUGGLE

RATING: 9.0

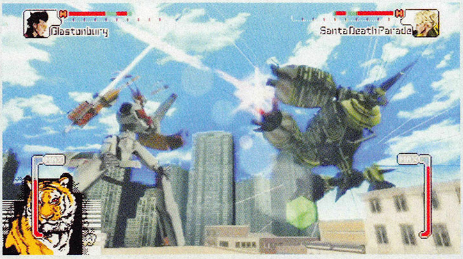
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE**
ESRB: **MATURE**

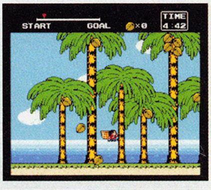
In 2008 I was introduced to one of my all-time favorite video game characters: Travis Touchdown. The protagonist of the insanely stylish Mature-rated action game No More Heroes had the right mix of coolness and geekiness that struck a chord with me, and I couldn't wait to play his further adventures. It's with that mindset that I re-entered Travis's hometown of Santa Destroy in No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle, and I'm pleased to say that I wasn't disappointed. Desperate Struggle improves upon its already-excellent predecessor in pretty much every conceivable way.

Take the city of Santa Destroy, for example. A common criticism of the first title was that you're given an open world to explore, but it's barren. The problem is solved by removing the open city entirely; you now select where you want to go on a map screen, then you're transported there instantly. The minigames, too, have been improved—to such an extent, in fact, that I spent hours playing them (the majority of them are old-school 8-bit-style games) instead of diving into the storyline missions. They're often fun, sometimes frustrating, and always rewarding.

But the real enjoyment comes from Desperate Struggle proper, wherein a revenge-fueled Travis (baddies killed his best friend, you see) fights his way up the ladder of the United Assassins Association. Each assassin is distinct and zany—a couple of them are holdovers from the first game—and I couldn't wait to see what kind of surprise the next boss battle would bring. One slight disappointment, however, is that there weren't quite as many boss encounters as I expected; Travis begins his adventure at rank 51, but there are way fewer than 50 assassin battles. (Mr. Touchdown does dispatch *a lot* of fodder enemies throughout the game, though, often in over-the-top ways. One of Travis's new special moves allows him to transform into a tiger and maul foes, for instance.) Fortunately, the assassin confrontations that are present are all entertaining in their own ways, so they don't become old hat. Also helping to keep things fresh are the two other playable characters, Henry and Shinobu, both of whom have their own missions. Being Travis's twin brother, Henry controls very similarly to his sibling. Shinobu, on the other hand, plays significantly differently due to her jumping ability. This allows for some platforming in her levels, and although not as solid as I'd like, controlling Shinobu still provides a nice change of pace. Another welcome addition is the Classic Controller support—partially because it simplifies pulling off finishing and wrestling maneuvers, as the game seems to have an easier time of recognizing your Control Stick inputs with the Classic Controller than your physical gestures with the Wii-Remote-and-Nunchuk combo.

No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle is ultimately a better game than the first No More Heroes. It's not quite as surprising an adventure as its predecessor—mainly because we didn't know what to expect from the original title—but it plays better while retaining the crazy-cool feel. Sadly, Suda51 (the mad genius behind the No More Heroes franchise and the executive director on this title) has told us that Desperate Struggle is Mr. Touchdown's final adventure. If that's the case, Desperate Struggle serves as a nice swan song, but we'll keep our fingers crossed for Travis's return nonetheless. **—JUSTIN C.**





[Left] Is there anything better than giant robots? [Above] The 8-bit-style minigames are a treat.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT CHARACTERS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN A SEQUEL TO SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING?

Justin Cheng

Racing with Edge and his dragon from Panzer Dragoon Saga would be all kinds of awesome.

Chris Hoffman

I'll second what Randy implied in his review—Golden Axe characters would be fantastic. I also wouldn't mind seeing Adam or Axel from Streets of Rage.

Randy Nelson

I pick Gunstar Red and Gunstar Blue from my favorite game, Gunstar Heroes, to race together as driver and navigator.

Chris Slate

How about one muscle-bound Altered Beast hero turning into a dragon and giving a ride to the other? Nah—too icky. I pick Joe Musashi, the ninja from Shinobi, riding a Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle. Or his wolf from Shadow Dancer.

David F. Smith

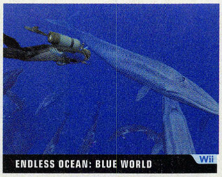
I'm not sure if the little guy ever had a name, but we need the day-glo flying dude from the original Space Harrier.

Steve Thomason

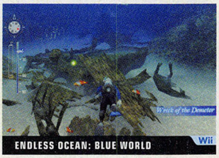
The only correct answer is Segata Sanshiro! The former spokesman for the Sega Saturn in Japan would just run along barefoot, grabbing other racers and judo throwing them from their karts.

Phil Theobald

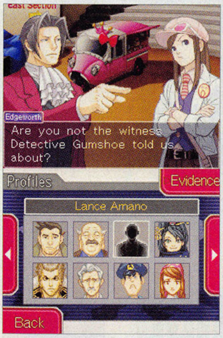
Mario and friends have competed against the Sega crew at the Olympics; taking the rivalry to the race (kart?) track seems the next logical step.



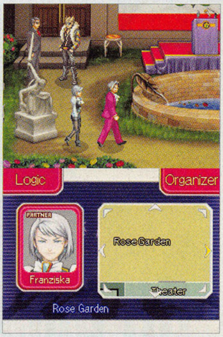
ENDLESS OCEAN: BLUE WORLD
Wii



ENDLESS OCEAN: BLUE WORLD
Wii



Are you not the witness Detective Gumshoe told us about?



ENDLESS OCEAN: BLUE WORLD

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ARIKA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

The original Endless Ocean was not for everyone. Deliberately paced and not exactly thrilling, it felt more like an interactive nature documentary than like a game. I certainly enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere, but I wanted a bit more *game* to keep me playing. Thankfully, the sequel, Endless Ocean: Blue World, provides just that. You're still exploring the oceans' depths, observing and interacting with all manner of marine animals, but there are now threats to your safety that you can fight against using the new pulsar tool (an electromagnetic gun that can heal injured critters and repel dangerous ones). And instead of the first Endless Ocean's loose narrative structure that nudges you along, Blue World has a compelling story about a mysterious song, an ancient civilization, and buried treasure. This is not an action-packed adventure, of course—the player character still moves rather slowly (you *are* underwater most of the time), which can make combat and time-limited sections more annoying than they should be—but it's a significant step up from its predecessor. In fact, pretty much everything about Blue World is better on the whole; the one thing I do miss, however, is the option to use a custom soundtrack.

—JUSTIN C.

You Can Handle the Truth

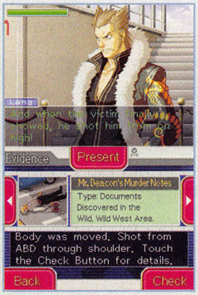
ACE ATTORNEY INVESTIGATIONS: MILES EDGEWORTH

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **TEEN**

If you ask me, prosecutor Miles Edgeworth is just the man Capcom needs to inject new life into its lighthearted cult-hit legal-drama series. With new main characters, newly interactive environments, and new variations on the gameplay, Ace Attorney Investigations offers enough fresh elements that it doesn't feel simply like the same old game with a new skin. At the same time, it retains all of the key components that have made the series successful, such as an eminently likable supporting cast and top-notch cartoon-style visuals. It's definitely a step up from the franchise's last entry (Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney), due not only to the confident, collected demeanor of protagonist Miles Edgeworth, but also to the comprehensible yet mystery-filled plot, satisfying story resolutions, and new play mechanic of logically linking clues together. Being able to freely move around crime scenes to talk to witnesses and look for places of interest adds extra depth, too. Of course, the tried-and-true Ace Attorney activities are still a lot of fun; despite the fact that the game isn't set in the courtroom (for the most part), you'll have plenty of opportunities to listen to testimony, press suspects for more info, and wave evidence in your opponents' faces to point out contradictions. There's certainly room for improvement—some character cameos seem forced, there are a few logic holes, and the story and writing aren't quite as good as they were in the Phoenix Wright games—but overall, fans of the Ace Attorney series and graphic-text adventure games in general will find little to object to in this excellent title.

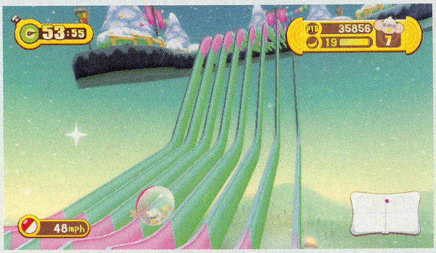
—CHRIS H.

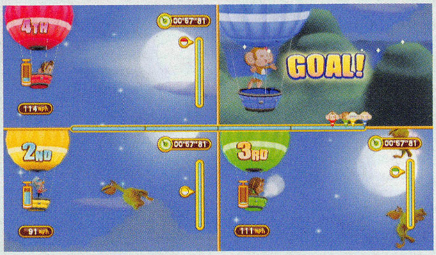


And when the victim finally showed, he shot him from on high!

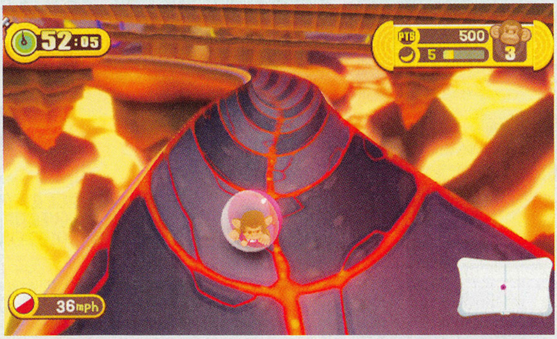
Mr. Deacon's Murder Notes
Type: Documents
Discovered in the Wild, Wild West Area.

Body was moved. Shot from ABD through shoulder. Touch the Check Button for details.





Off Balance



SUPER MONKEY BALL STEP & ROLL

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

After a three-year hiatus, Sega's pantsless primates are back for more arcade-inspired shenanigans. The core idea is the same as it's always been—tilt the game's world to lead your ball-enslaved monkey to the goal—but Step & Roll introduces a few brand-new features, including support for the Wii Balance Board accessory and a two-player co-op mode. Sounds like a sure-fire winner, right? Yet somehow, this barrel of monkeys isn't nearly as much fun as its predecessors.

Let's get the balance board compatibility out of the way first: it's an unmitigated disaster. If you go into Step & Roll anticipating an immersive new way to play Super Monkey Ball, you're going to be sorely disappointed. It's one of those ideas that probably looked good on paper, but in reality, it simply doesn't work. Though the stages are dumbed down considerably when you're using the board, even the most basic maneuvers become a chore. Most players will likely get frustrated after about 10 minutes and switch to the Wii Remote.

Unfortunately, that doesn't rid the game of significant problems. The most notable is the wildly uneven difficulty. The first three worlds pose almost no challenge whatsoever, then the final three slap you around something fierce. It's not that I mind a stiff challenge—it's long been a trademark of the series. What I take issue with is the complete lack of buildup and the questionable level design. Most of the stages in those last three worlds are much longer than in previous installments, piling on one crazy obstacle after another and requiring you to negotiate them at top speed if you hope to reach the goal before time expires. As much as I enjoy the motion controls, they're just not up to such tasks, and the series still hasn't figured out how to remedy its camera issues.

On the bright side, co-op play is pretty entertaining. One person steers the monkey while a buddy blasts obstacles from his path. There's a specially modified version of each stage for this mode, and the overall balance feels a lot better than in the single-player component.

Step & Roll also includes a bevy of minigames for up to four players, though the selection has, inexplicably, been pared from the 50 in Banana Blitz down to 21. Missing are some old favorites like Monkey Golf, and most of the new selections feel too gimmicky. All in all, this package is significantly less robust than we've come to expect from the series.

Though that Monkey Ball magic still shines through on occasion, Step & Roll continues the steady decline the franchise has seen since the phenomenal first two games. As much as I hate to say so, it may be time to set these monkeys free.

—STEVE T.

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-500
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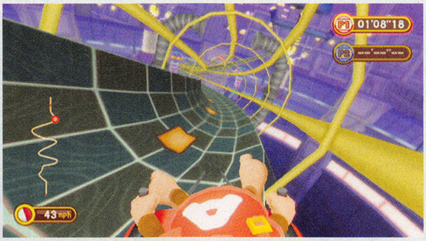
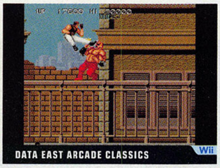
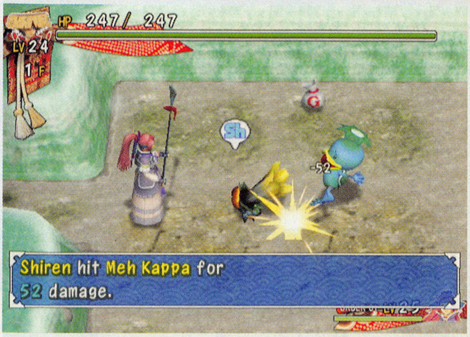


[Right] The new luge minigame is a bit reminiscent of F-Zero. Speaking of which, that series really needs to come to Wii.

RAGNAROK DS



DATA EAST ARCADE CLASSICS



Attack
Save SP
Flee!
Free
Menu
DS

RAGNAROK DS

1UP=002600
TIME=0068
STRAIGHT
BALL
POWER
Wii

DATA EAST ARCADE CLASSICS

RAGNAROK DS

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **GUNGHO WORKS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

When the characters themselves start complaining about a game's plot, that's usually not a good sign. Sad to say, it happens early in Ragnarok DS. After completing one typically silly fetch-and-carry job, the leader of the party declares, "Wow. That was pointless." It's too bad, because not all of this game is badly made. The parts that come from the original Ragnarok Online—MMO-style real-time combat, and a versatile system for building a unique hero inspired by the Final Fantasy job scheme—have clearly seen plenty of refinement over the years. Here, though, they're bolted on to a slow, boring story and a string of quests that feel like arbitrary time-fillers.

Yes, Ragnarok DS has an online co-op mode, where three characters team up via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Before you get too excited, however, consider these limitations: online adventures take place in a single dungeon, the level themes and layouts are incessantly repetitive, there's no goal or point beyond grinding for items, and the challenges aren't any more complex than "kill this monster" or "flip that switch." Gauntlet had more to offer back in 1985.

Ragnarok starts from a solid foundation. It might be fun to play if the story did the least bit to pull the player forward. Instead, it tends to feel more like running in place—as the man says, there's not much point to it. **—DAVID S.**

DATA EAST ARCADE CLASSICS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **G1M2**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Though there's certainly some fun to be had with Data East Arcade Classics, the title is a misnomer—few of the 15 games contained within are true classics. Even the ones that are have been designed with a rather mindless arcade mentality: they're full of unavoidable deaths and cheap AI meant to gobble up quarters. Nonetheless, this game is chock-full of content (including some sleeper surprises like Express Raider), and if you have fond memories of games such as Bad Dudes and Burger Time you'll get a kick out of this bargain-priced collection, especially if you have a friend to join you. More options would have been nice, however, and it's a shame that legit classic Karnov isn't included. **—CHRIS H.**

Dungeon-Crawling 101

SHIREN THE WANDERER

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT**
ESRB: **TEEN**

After 2008's mercilessly difficult Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer for DS, the most notable update for the Wii version of Shiren the Wanderer is an Easy mode that offers a gentler experience for those easily frustrated by frequent deaths that bring steep penalties. Shiren still plays like a typical dungeon crawler—as you explore dungeons looking for loot, for every move you make, each enemy near you makes a move as well. Since the combat is so basic (press A to attack, or use the 1 or 2 Buttons to use equipped offensive items such as stones and arrows), the real strategy is in the careful ballet of moves you make to avoid being surrounded and to ensure you get the first hit as often as possible.

Although the story is disposable, a few of Shiren's characters shine, especially Koppa the kind-hearted yet sharp-tongued ferret, and the beautiful girl named Asuka who saves Shiren and friends' hides repeatedly. The soundtrack is another highlight—the rich woodwinds and drums practically transported us to feudal Japan.

Even with its rousing music and two levels of difficulty, , though, most players skilled enough to handle the gameplay will be bored with its overall simplicity. But a select few exist who can savor its simple elegance, like a game of checkers or chess. Ultimately, your take on this game will depend on whether you see constant setbacks due to horrible flaming death as an irresistible challenge or as a frustrating waste of time. **—CAROLYN G.**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T
Virtua Tennis 2009	7.0	Sega	244	E
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T

MORE ON:

A BOY AND HIS BLOB

I finally found the time to play through much of this puzzlish adventure, and you can consider me charmed. While the traps are very clever, the game really hooked me with its heart. It makes me feel like a kid, without coming across as being too kiddy. **—CHRIS SL.**

MORE ON:

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: THE CRYSTAL BEARERS

This experimental oddity won't appeal to everyone, but it's highly creative, looks fantastic, and features lethal cow udders. Check it out if you have an affinity for the unconventional. **—STEVE T.**

Iron Giant: Called the "train giant" by locals, this monster is usu

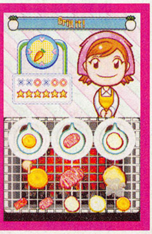
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	5.0	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	4.0	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon Plus	8.0	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	7.0	Ignition	239	E
Bookworm DS	8.5	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	6.0	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	4.0	Ubisoft	249	T
C.O.R.E.	5.5	Graffiti	242	M
The Dark Spire	5.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Dawn of Discovery	8.5	Ubisoft	244	E
Dokapon Journey	4.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	8.0	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	8.5	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	8.0	THQ	248	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	4.0	Aspyr	248	T
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.5	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	8.5	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	6.0	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Fossil Fighters	8.0	Nintendo	246	E
Gardening Mama	8.0	Majesco	240	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	9.0	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	7.0	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	8.0	Natsume	243	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	7.0	Natsume	248	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	8.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	7.0	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	4.0	505	246	E10+
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	6.0	Aksys	242	T
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	9.0	Square Enix	247	E10+
Knights in the Nightmare	8.0	Atlus	243	T
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
The Legendary Starfy	7.0	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Battles	5.0	Warner Bros.	243	E
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	5.0	LucasArts	249	E10+
Lux-Pain	4.0	Ignition	240	T
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	7.5	Konami	242	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	9.5	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	8.0	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/Black Ace	6.0	Capcom	244	E
Miami Law	3.0	Hudson	243	T
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	8.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	6.0	Eidos	247	E10+
My World, My Way	7.0	Atlus	239	E
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	5.0	Tomy	243	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	7.0	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	7.0	Ignition	248	E10+
Overlord Minions	7.0	Codemasters	244	E10+
Peggle Dual Shot	8.5	PopCap	240	E
Phantasy Star 0	8.0	Sega	248	E10+
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	8.0	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	8.0	Nintendo	246	E10+
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	8.0	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Rhythm Heaven	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Roogoo Attack	4.0	SouthPeak	243	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	9.0	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	8.0	Atlus	244	T
Space Bust-A-Move	7.0	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	8.0	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	5.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	5.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
Steal Princess	6.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	7.0	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	7.0	Atlus	241	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	4.5	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tokyo Beat Down	6.0	Atlus	240	T
Touch Mechanic	5.0	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	7.0	Atlus	240	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	7.0	Activision	245	E10+
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	9.0	Square Enix	240	T
WireWay	6.5	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	4.0	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	6.5	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.0	THQ	248	T
Zubo	6.5	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

MORE ON:

COOKING MAMA 3: SHOP & CHOP

I've gotta agree with George on this one. While I've always enjoyed the frantic action of the Cooking Mama series, it's starting to get bland. New recipes and new minigames and shopping expeditions are fine, but what I really want is something I can sink my teeth into—like a career mode or a story mode or even an arcade mode—and in that regard Cooking Mama 3 doesn't deliver. —CHRIS H.



MORE ON:

MIGHT & MAGIC: CLASH OF HEROES

I'm not really a fan of Might & Magic (not because I don't like the series; I just haven't played the games), but I'm a huge fan of Clash of Heroes. I had planned on checking the game out for a little while in order to see what the fuss was all about, but I became so engrossed that I ended up played this puzzle-strategy-RPG title for hours. In fact, I'd say that I actually like Clash of Heroes more than Puzzle Quest. —JUSTIN C.

HP 63/67
2
16
2
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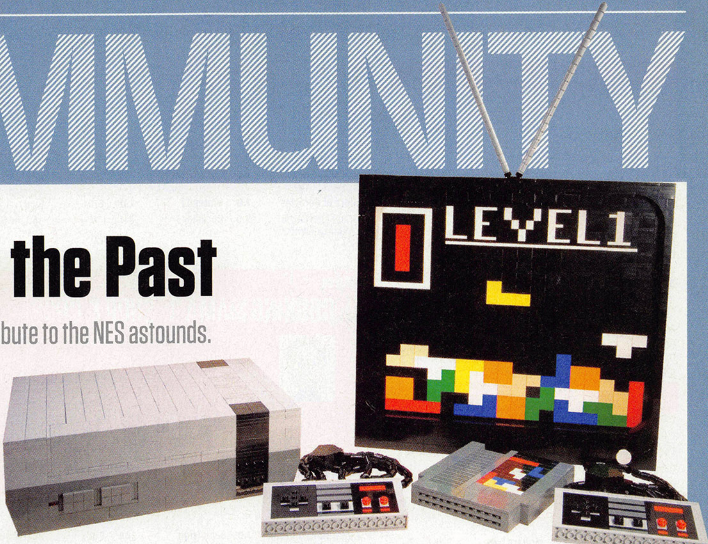
FANDOM

Building the Past

This LEGO aficionado's tribute to the NES astounds.



You could say Dave Sterling has an eye for detail. The 29-year-old engineer from Wisconsin may spend his days designing plastic materials used for defense and aerospace applications, but a good chunk of his free time is devoted to a more carefree plastic pursuit—building things with LEGOs. Putting his design skills to the test, he built this impeccably close-to-scale NES smorgasbord for a retro-gaming-themed 2009 LEGO competition sponsored by MOCpages (www.mocpages.com). Pardon us while we wipe up our drool.

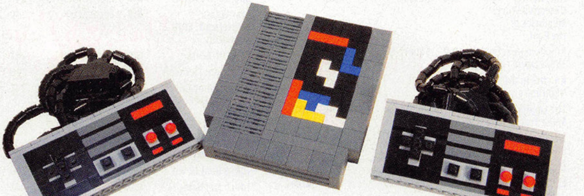
The hardest part was deciding what to make for the competition, says Sterling, though the project moved along at a steady clip once he found his inspiration. "I chose the NES because it was the first console I ever owned, and it really is a timeless classic that deserved to be immortalized in LEGO form," he explains. "Its blocky structure also tends to lend itself to building with LEGO elements."

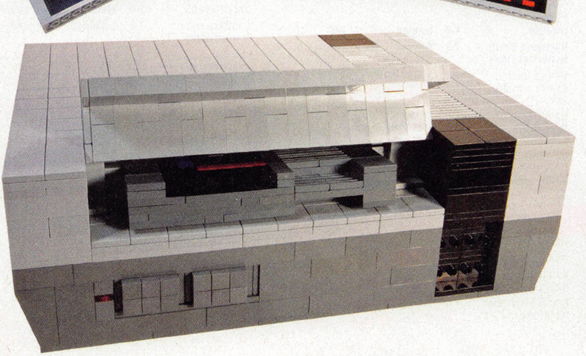
Crafting the NES, two controllers, a Tetris cartridge, and an old TV out of LEGO bricks took about two days of work and a lot of research in order to get things just right. Much of the project was done through trial and error, which led to Sterling tearing elements apart and rebuilding them several times to get them as close to perfection as possible. The extra effort really paid off. He won first place in the competition.

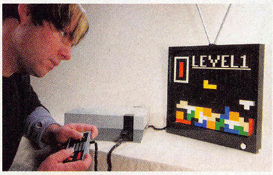
"For me, it was very important for this creation to be as close to actual scale as possible while retaining some of the functionality of the original console, such as the Power/Reset buttons and the loading slot," Sterling notes. "Since I was building this for a contest, I felt that nearly replicating the dimensions and including functionality would be what would set this apart from my opponent's creation."

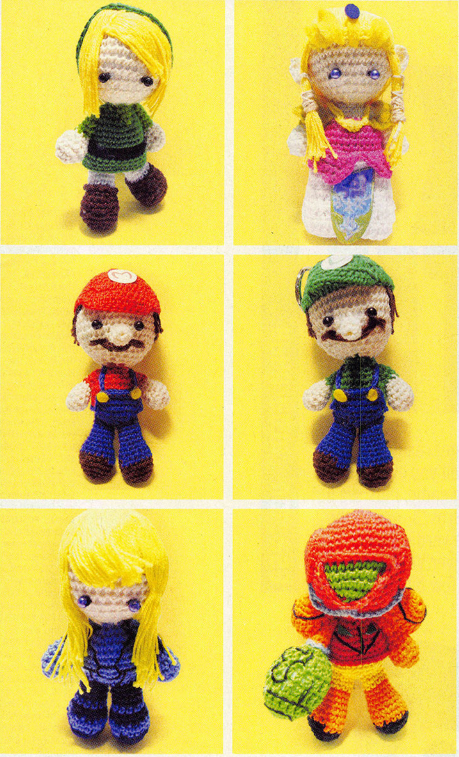
What's really amazing is how close to the real thing each piece looks. Close inspection of Sterling's handiwork reveals the true depth of his dedication to authenticity. From the spring-loaded Power and Reset buttons to the functioning cartridge slot that can actually be loaded and depressed, admiring this LEGO homage to the early days of the NES takes us back in time.

—NATHAN M.









FANDOM

Mini Yarn Heroes

Check out these fist-sized, mighty NES warriors!

Intergalactic bounty hunters and green-clad elf heroes have never looked quite so adorable. Filipino web developer and crafter Erin Denise Chupeco grew up on a steady diet of NES, and her gaming preferences are manifest in her creations. "While my sister and other girl pals were playing with Barbie dolls and trying on clothes, I was parked in front of the television, yelling at toadstools who sheepishly [told] me that the princess is in yet another castle," she explains. When Chupeco first started making *amigurumi* (Japanese-style crocheted stuffed dolls), she naturally gravitated toward familiar video game characters from her youth.

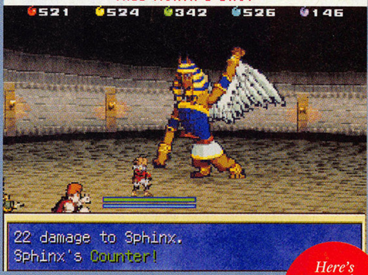
Whether it's the famed Mario Bros., Link and pals from The Legend of Zelda, Samus Aran in her various forms, popular characters from the Final Fantasy series, or other gaming heroes, Chupeco enjoys putting her own spin on the characters, making them both familiar and unique at the same time. Made out of sturdy yarn and crafted at about four inches in height, all the dolls look pretty much the same until the final touches are made. "I think that's part of the fun in making them, though—not knowing how it's really going to look... and figuring out how to make that happen," she says. —**NATHAN M.**

WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

SEND CAPTION TO screentest@nintendopower.com.

THIS MONTH'S SHOT

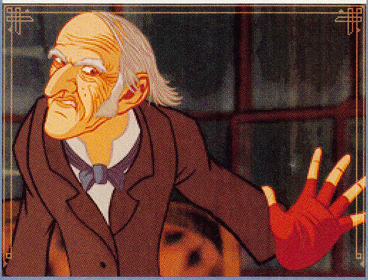


22 damage to Sphinx.
Sphinx's Counter!

The Sphinx's "school theory of combat"—wherein you raise your hand and wait your turn—never caught on.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 250'S SHOT



"My wrist appears to be bending at a 90-degree angle.... This could be problematic." —**ROBERT M.**

"Marley, just because you are a ghost doesn't mean you don't have to wear clothes!" —**THEBIGCHEZ**

"The old man suddenly realized somebody slipped him Ash Ketchum's gloves." —**COLIN V.**

"In the words of Beyoncé: 'If you liked it, then you should've put a ring on it.'" —**ALEXA J.**

"Mr. Scrooge was happy with his career as a mime until he found out he was trapped in an actual box." —**BRANDON H.**

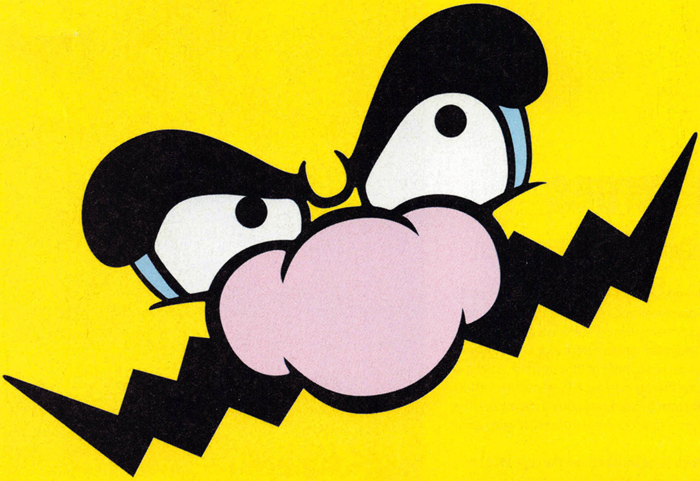
ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

NEXT MONTH

APRIL 2010 • VOL. 253

You want creative? You want innovative? Then get ready for next issue. Our in-depth WarioWare D.I.Y. feature will tell you everything you need to know about this groundbreaking game. Plus, we'll celebrate the 20th anniversary of Super Mario Bros. 3—one of the most successful games of all time—and deliver the verdicts on titles such as Red Steel 2, Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions, and Infinite Space. And, of course, there'll be a few big surprises.



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FROM A LEADER IN GAME DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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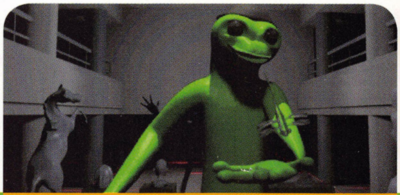
DigiPen Institute of Technology, recognized by the industry as a premier game development college, presents a two-week summer workshop series designed to introduce participants of all experience levels to the fundamentals of *game programming*, *3D computer animation*, *game design* and *robotics*.

- **Make your own video game, 3D animation or robotic vehicle**
- **Get an opportunity to tour portions of Nintendo of America and the Microsoft Museum**
- **Engage in after-school activities including game tournaments and guest industry speakers**

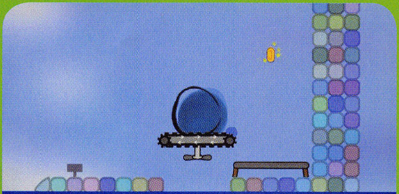
GAME PROGRAMMING



3D ANIMATION

Get a sneak peek of the Workshops at the **ProjectFUN Summer Workshop Preview Day** on Saturday, April 24!

Attendees will receive a **$100.00 discount** toward any one of the Summer Workshops.



GAME DESIGN

To find out more, register for Preview Day, or research online options, please visit:

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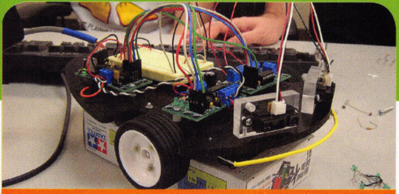

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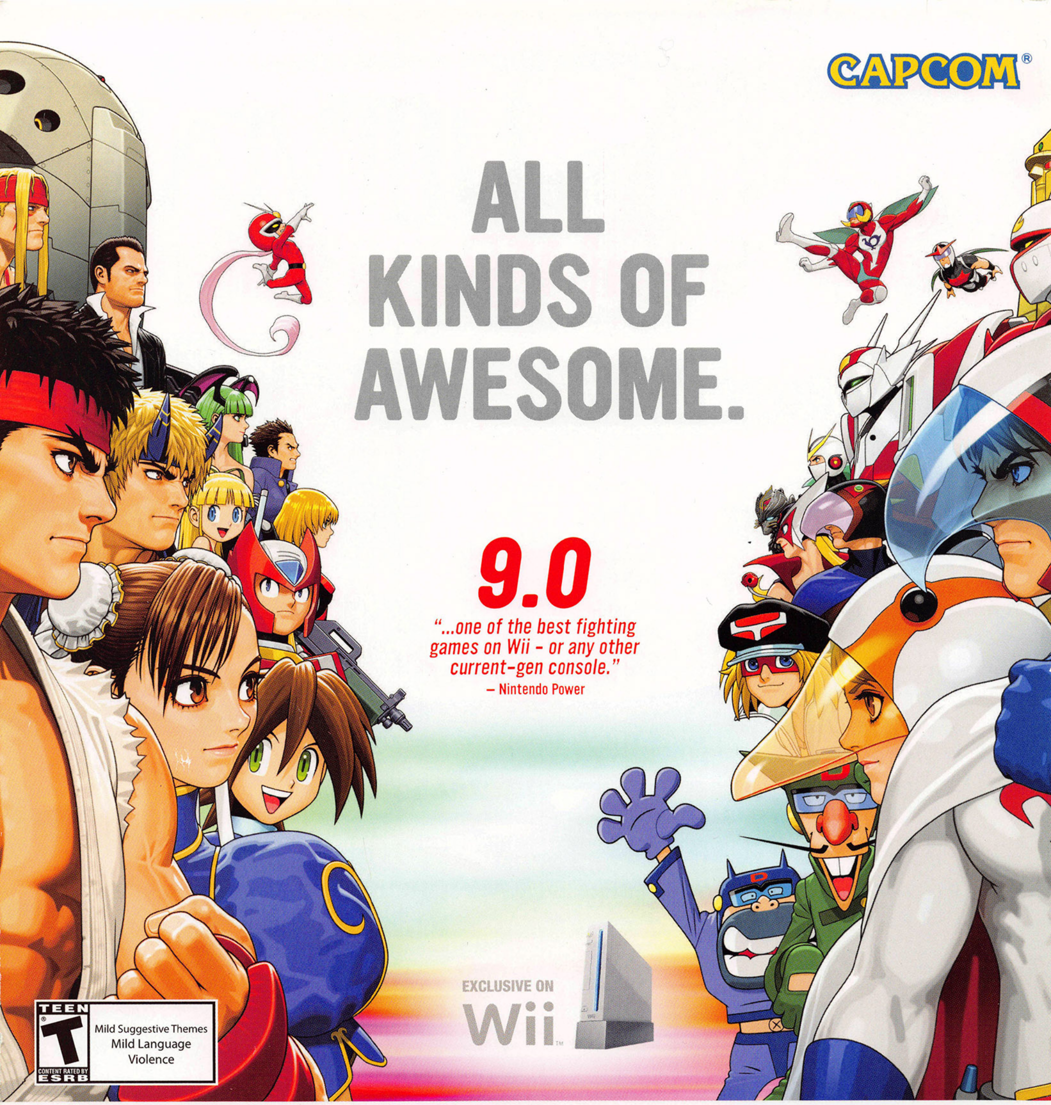

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